MEMOIRS

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

RICHARD LALOR SHEIL.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "THE INDUSTRIAL HISTORY OF FREE NATIONS,"

ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON

PUBLISHED FOR HENRY COLBURN,

BY HIS SUCCESSORS, HURST AND BLACKETT,

GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1855.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

HENRY LABOUCHERE, M.P.,

These Volumes are Inscribed,

AS A TRIBUTE OF

PUBLIC RESPECT AND PERSONAL REGARD,

BY HIS ATTACHED FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE biography of a man of genius ought to be the history of his thoughts. If he has been a man of action, the narrative of his life will necessarily consist in the chronicle of his deeds: if he has been a man of letters, his ideas must be sought for in his works; and the story of his life will best be told by accounting for these,—how they came to be designed, and under what circumstances they were executed. Auto-biography—which for clearness of outline and truth of colouring is generally regarded as the best—often fails in the particular just mentioned. It is a true picture, but it is of the pre-Raphaelite school. The most faithful self-analyst, as he gazes intently at his own image in the glass, is apt to become unconscious or unmindful of the many incidents that have con-

tributed to make him what he is. Artist though he be, he forgets perspective; and in the want of background we lose much of the reality of the portrait. A few of kindred spirit and quick fancy, may indeed supply at will the deficiency for themselves: but after all, it is for the unimaginative many that biography is written.

On the other hand, we seem to have fallen too much of late into the practice of enumerating commonplace details, which only serve to prove how numerous are the points of identity between the outward lot of those possessing high intellectual gifts, and that of those around them. I do not question the tendency of such proof to check the vanity of some who may, on insufficient grounds, persuade themselves that they too belong to nature's privileged class: and every day's observation shows how insatiable public curiosity becomes, when once accustomed to biographic catalogues of casual acquaintances, inventories of household stuff, and all the indescribable trivialities of social life. It seems to me that there is hardly time for reading such as this; and that what is chiefly worth knowing of remarkable men, is wherein

they differed from their ordinary fellows, and how they came so much to differ,—rather than an elaborate demonstration by the exhaustive method, of the flattening theory, that all are, in the main, pottery of the same clay.

My desire in the present work has been, as far as the materials placed at my disposal enabled me, to present in succession the feelings and ideas of my lamented friend as they occupied his mind, in his own way, and generally in his own words. With this view I have not hesitated to give numerous extracts from his speeches, plays, and essays, most of which are inaccessible to ordinary readers. Reminiscences of conversations with myself and others have enabled me to supply, in some degree, the want of correspondence upon subjects of importance. He was not what is called a letter-writer; and I have perused whole piles of written communications, addressed by him at various times to different persons, without being tempted to make a single quotation. The truth appears to have been that at all times, and more especially in his latter years, writing upon ordinary subjects was irksome to him: and hence the com-

parative scarcity and the almost invariable brevity of his epistles. When excited by some sudden piece of news, he would sometimes sit down and indite to a friend in the country what he used to call "a telegraphic despatch." But there were few, even of his intimates, to whom he wrote at any length on the topics that most interested him; and his happiest thoughts are to be gathered from recollections of social converse, and from his known compositions. My desire has been to collect and illustrate these by just so much of explanatory observation as might render them fully appreciable. In many of the opinions strikingly expressed throughout these volumes I entirely concur; while from others, were it necessary, I should be disposed to dissent. But I felt that it would have been an unpardonable intrusion if, as a biographer, I had sought to intermix my own sentiments unnecessarily with those, of which I had undertaken to give the substance and the sum.

W. T. M.

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CHAPTER I.

1791—1809.

Bellevue—Birth and parentage—Valley of the Suir—School days at Kensington—Charles X.—Stonyhurst—University of Dublin—Dramatic tendencies—A fancy ball—Family reverses—Dr. William Foley.

On the left bank of the Suir, about three miles from Waterford, is situated Bellevue, the home in childhood of Richard Lalor Sheil. The estate, of which it forms a part, originally bore the name of Gurteens, and is mentioned in the Inquisitions of Leinster as belonging, in the year 1607, to one Nicholas Fitzgerald.* Being forfeited in the civil wars it became the possession of Samuel Skrimshiere, one of the sol-

* Temp. Jac. I. Thomastown, 16th July, 1607.

diers of the Commonwealth who accompanied Cromwell into Ireland; and, under the Act of Settlement, it was confirmed to him in 1667 by the Court of Claims.*

Won without thrift, the estates of the military colonists were seldom preserved with care. In the second or third generation their descendants were frequently compelled to alienate the lands, which, in the hope of founding families, had been invariably tied up in the strictest forms of entail. Partly owing to this circumstance, and partly no doubt to the condition of things which prevailed in Ireland from the Revolution to the end of the American war, little progress was made in reclamation or tillage, and still less in building or planting.† The industry of the many was forbidden by law to invest its savings in the purchase or permanent occupancy of land:‡ so the land which nature had meant to be prolific was

* Report Record Commissioners, 1825, p. 120.

† Reflections and Resolutions proper for the Gentlemen of Ireland, by R. E. Madden, 1738.—State of Ireland, by Thomas Prior, 1742; Arthur Young's Tour, 1779.

‡ By the 9 Will. III., ch. 3, and 2 Anne, ch. 6, Catholics were disabled from purchasing or holding lands for a longer time than thirty-one years; a son who conformed to Protestantism might dispossess his father of his estate by a bill of discovery; and by a similar proceeding a Protestant landlord might break the lease of any Catholic tenant who could be proved to have made more than one-third above the rent of his farm.

condemned to lie profitless and unfruitful; and the enterprise interdicted at home sought in foreign realms for honour and reward.

Edward Sheil, the father of the subject of these memoirs, had passed his earlier years in Spain. He was a man of quick intelligence, and active in the pursuit of business. Many of his countrymen were settled at Cadiz, where they gradually acquired wealth and distinction by their devotion to trade. Mr. Sheil, although possessing the advantage of some family connexions in the place, was mainly, if not altogether, indebted to his own energy and perseverance for the acquisition of a considerable fortune, with which he returned to his native country. It was about the period when a disposition had manifested itself to relax the severities of the penal code. An act had been passed in 1778 by the Parliament of Ireland, extending the term for which land might be held by Catholics to ninety-nine years; and in 1782, through the exertions of Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Grattan, backed by the impressive petitions of the Volunteers, the right to purchase and transmit property in fee, with other important privileges, was further conceded. In the following year Gurteens was for sale, and Mr. Sheil became the purchaser. It had previously

passed into the possession of the Honourable Henry Ponsonby, who had already chosen the site of a dwelling-house near the spot on which the present mansion stands, when he was summoned to join his regiment abroad, whence he was not destined to return. Other portions of the original estate had been mortgaged or leased to different parties, but they were reunited in the hands of the successful merchant. An ancient keep, the relic of troubled times, and which the peasantry were used to call Gurteens Castle, still overlooked the broad and winding river from the summit of the undulating hill on which it stood. A few old trees likewise remained; but nothing had been done to improve the natural capabilities of the soil, and a considerable portion of the lands had long been overgrown by the wild thorn and the fern. The place soon assumed a very different aspect. A handsome and commodious dwelling-house was built by the new possessor, and the plantations formed that now render it an object of no little attraction in a neighbourhood full of noble mansions and picturesque localities. The valley of the Suir, of which Spencer speaks in admiration, has at all times been a favourite place of residence with the gentry of the neighbouring counties; and

may well vie with that of the Lee in rich and varied beauty.

Not long after his return from Spain, Mr. Sheil married Miss Catherine McCarthy, of Spring House, in the county of Tipperary, whose sister was the wife of General D'Alton, an officer who served with distinction in the Austrian army. These ladies were nearly related to Count McCarthy, who had formerly possessed large estates in Ireland; but who, having disposed of them, settled at Toulouse, where his family subsequently resided. By this marriage, Mr. Sheil had several children. The eldest son, Richard, was born on the 17th of August, 1791, at Drumdowney, a small country house occupied by his father previous to the completion of Bellevue. Of his childhood, few traits have been preserved. He is said, indeed, to have early evinced that quickness of apprehension, and impulsive readiness to be excited or depressed, by which the whole tenour of his after-life was strongly marked. In boyish pastimes, he does not seem to have taken any great interest, choosing, in preference, to listen to tales of wonder, or the stories so full of capricious humour with which, in Ireland, every fire-side abounds. An old man, named James Hincks, who was born in the neighbourhood, and who for many years was en-

gaged in their service, speaks with the warmest affection of the whole family. The old gentleman was, he says, hasty and hot-tempered, but the best hearted man in the world, and always looking after the comforts of his workpeople and dependents. When any of the cottagers in the neighbourhood happened to be ill, not only were their wants provided for "from the big house," but one of the young ladies would generally administer relief from her own basket. As young Richard grew up, Hincks distinctly recollects the peculiarities of manner, which sometimes made people who did not know him fancy that he was out of his mind. "I have often seen him walking about with his book in his hand, and talking to himself, and then, all of a sudden, he would put his book on the stump of a tree, and he would throw and fling his arms about, and he would scold at it as if it was a man he was in a passion with."

On the susceptible mind of the moody and imaginative boy, the scenery in the midst of which his early home was situated was well calculated to make a deep and lasting impression. The house, which is finely situated, stands about three hundred yards from the river, on a gentle slope, rising gradually from the water's edge, along which the park extends for a

considerable distance. From different points there are beautiful views, of great variety, both up and down the Suir (which is here nearly half-a-mile broad), and over many miles of the barony of Gaultier, in the county of Waterford. Immediately opposite are the woods of Faithleg, behind which rise the rocky summits of Minaun Hin.

The traffic on the river has at all times been considerable between Waterford and many English and foreign ports. So early as the time of Spencer the intercourse with the continent was so frequent that, next to Cork, Waterford, he says, most needed to have a garrison, as being the chief "in-gate of the Spaniards."* At the beginning of the present century its commerce bore the same proportion to that of other places in the southern part of the kingdom; and then, as now, the constant passing to and fro of vessels of large tonnage rendered the scene in front of Bellevue a very animated one. From the memory of the youthful wanderer by the river side, the dream-like pleasure he derived from the scenes and objects that surrounded him does not seem to have ever passed away. In long after years he thus recalled

* View of the State of Ireland in 1596, by Edmund Spencer. 217.

his last look, ere leaving home for school, at the woods and hills with which his boyhood had been familiar.

"How often have I stood upon its banks, when the bells in the city, the smoke of which was turned into a cloud of gold by a Claude Lorraine sun-set, tolled the death of the departing day! How often have I fixed my gaze upon the glittering expanse of the full and overflowing water, crowded with ships whose white sails were filled with just wind enough to carry them on to the sea, by the slowness of their equable and majestic movements giving leave to the eye to contemplate at its leisure their tall and stately beauty, and to watch them long in their progress amidst the calm through which they made their gentle and forbearing way! The murmurs of the city were heard upon the right, and the lofty spire of its church rose up straight and arrowy into the sky. The sullen and dull roar of the ocean used to come over the opposite hills from the bay of Tramore. Immediately before me were the fine woods of Faithleg, the noble seat of the Bolton family (Protestants, who have since that time made way for the Catholic wealthy Powers); on the left was the seat of another branch of the same opulent family, Snow Hill; and in the distance, where the three rivers, the Suir, the Nore, and the Barrow, meet

in a deep and splendid conflux, the ruins of the old abbey of Dunbrody threw the solemnity of religion and of antiquity over the whole prospect, and by the exquisite beauty of the site, afforded a proof that the old Francisians who had made a selection of this lovely spot for their monastery, and who have lain for centuries in the mould of its green and luxuriant church-yards, were the lovers of nature; and that when they left the noise and turmoil of the world, they had not relinquished those enjoyments which are not only innocent but may be accounted holy. I had many a time looked with admiration upon the noble landscape in the midst of which I was born, but I never felt and appreciated its beauty so well as when the consciousness that I was leaving it, not to return for years to it again, endeared to me the spot of my birth, and set off the beauty of the romantic place in which my infancy was passed, and in which I once hoped (I have since abandoned the expectation) that my old age should decline. It is not in the midst of its woods that I shall fall into the sear and yellow leaf!"*

His first instruction in the rudiments of French

* Schoolboy Recollections, &c. New Monthly Magazine, August, 1829.

and Latin had been derived from the Abbé de Grimeau, a native of Languedoc, who had been forced to leave his country during the Revolution, and who for some years had been domesticated as tutor in the family at Bellevue. At the conclusion of the Peace of Amiens, the Abbé availed himself of the permission afforded to so many of his fellow-exiles to return to France, and as young Sheil was then in his eleventh year, his parents resolved that he should accompany his old preceptor on his way, as far as London, in order that he might be placed at school. Arrived at the end of their journey, the Abbé kindly devoted several days to the business of showing his pupil some of the sights of the great city which fill the mind of a boy with wonder and delight. This done, he informed him that the time for their separation drew near, and that his instructions were, to leave him at Kensington House, where a school had been established under the auspices of certain French refugees, who styled themselves the *Pères de la Foi*. Thither they proceeded accordingly. Through the openwork of the large old-fashioned gates was to be seen a garden, filled with shrubs and flowers. It was the first glimpse of his new abode, and struck the curious eye of the little stranger with a certain sense of pleasure. Instead of immediately entering the house,

he was led by his old friend to the playground, which was situated at the rear of the building.

The moment he entered, his ears were filled with the shrill vociferations of some hundreds of little emigrants who were engaged in their various amusements, and babbled, screamed, laughed, and shouted in all the velocity of their rapid and joyous language. He did not hear a word of English, and at once perceived that he was as much amongst Frenchmen as if he had been suddenly transferred to a Parisian college. Having got this peep at the gaiety of the school into which he was to be introduced, he was led, with his companion, to a chamber covered with faded gilding, and which had once been richly tapestried, where he found the head of the establishment, in the person of a French nobleman, Monsieur le Prince de Broglie.*

M. de Broglie was the son of the well-known Marshal who bore a considerable part in the events of 1790, in France. Like most of his family, he had been trained to the profession of arms; but during the Emigration he was induced, while residing in Germany, to take Orders: and coming to England some years later, he endeavoured to support himself by opening a school, where the sons of his fellow-

* Schoolboy Recollections, &c.

countrymen in exile, in addition to the ordinary opportunities of instruction, might preserve a knowledge of the dialect and associations of the country they had lost. The political and ecclesiastical ideas of the Abbé were alike uncompromising. He refused to return to France, after the amnesty conceded by Napoleon, because he could not conscientiously take the oath of fidelity to the constitution; and his repugnance to the Concordat granted by Pius VII. led him, in concert with others who entertained similar opinions, to constitute themselves into a species of schismatic church, denominated *La Petite Eglise*. He found it difficult to relinquish the enjoyments of society and those habits of expense to which he had been early accustomed. He kept a well-appointed curricle and pair, which he prided himself on driving with grace and skill. By the more ascetic members of the establishment he was thought to retain too much of the man of the world; but his foibles, such as they were, lay wholly in too great a love of expense, for in all more important particulars his life was a blameless one. Credulous and inexperienced in business, he was sometimes tempted to speculate in matters of which he knew little. He was thus led into expenditure above his means, and was eventu-

ally obliged to give up the establishment at Kensington.

His person and manners, which retained all the impress of the *vieille cour*, are thus described from recollection by his new pupil: "I saw in him a little, slender and gracefully-constructed Abbé, with a sloping forehead, on which the few hairs that were left him were nicely arranged, and well-powdered and pomatomed. He had a gentle smile, full of suavity, which was made up of guile and of weakness, but which deserved the designation of *aimable* in the best sense of the word. His clothes were adapted with a peculiar nicety to his symmetrical person, and his silk waistcoat and black silk stockings, with his small shoes buckled with silver, gave him altogether a glossy aspect. Notwithstanding his humble pursuits, he was designated by everybody as 'Monsieur le Prince.' . . . . The preliminaries of introduction having been gone through, my French tutor took his farewell; and, as he embraced me for the last time, I well remember that he was deeply affected by the sorrow which I felt at my separation from him; and turning to Monsieur le Prince, recommended me to his care with an emphatic tenderness. The latter led me into

the school-room, where I had a desk assigned to me beside the son of the Count Décar, who has since, I understand, risen to offices of very high rank in the French court. His father belonged to the nobility of the first class. In his son it would have been at that time difficult to detect his patrician derivation. He was a huge lubberly fellow, with thick, matted hair, which he never combed. His complexion was greasy and sudorific, and to soap and water he seemed to have such a repugnance that he did not above once a week go through any process of ablution. He was surly, dogged and silent; and spent his time in the study of mathematics, for which he had a good deal of talent. I have heard that he is now one of the most fashionable and accomplished men about the court—that this Gorgonius smells now of the pastiles of Rufillus.

"On the other side of me was a young French West Indian, from the colony of Martinique, whose name was Devarieux. The school was full of the children of the French planters, who had been sent over to learn English among the refugees from the Revolution. He was an exceedingly fine young fellow, the exact reverse in all his habits to Monsieur le Compte Décar, on my left hand, and expended a good deal of

his hours of study in surveying a small pocket mirror, and in arranging the curls of his rich black hair, the ambrosial plenty of which was festooned about his temples, and fell profusely behind his head. Almost all the French West Indians were vain, foppish, generous, brave and passionate. They exhibited many of the qualities which we ascribe to the natives of our own islands in the American archipelago; they were a sort of Gallican Belcours in little; for, with the national attributes of their forefathers, they united much of that vehemence and habit of domination which a hot sun and West Indian overseership are calculated to produce. In general, the children of the French exiles amalgamated readily with these Creoles. There were, to be sure, some points of substantial difference; the French West Indians being all rich *roturiers*, and the little emigrants having their veins full of the best blood of France without a groat in their pockets. But there was one point of reconciliation between them—they all concurred in hating England and its government. This detestation was not very surprising in the West Indian French; but it was not a little singular that the boys whose fathers had been expelled from France by the Revolution, and to whom England had afforded shelter and given

bread, should manifest the ancient national antipathy as strongly as if they had never been nursed at her bosom, and obtained their aliment from her bounty. Whenever news arrived of a victory won by Buonaparte, the whole school was thrown into a ferment; and I cannot, even at this distance of time, forget the exultation with which the sons of the decapitated or exiled hailed the triumph of the French arms, the humiliation of England, and the glory of the nation whose greatness they had learned to lisp. . . . . Old gentlemen, the neatness of whose attire was accompanied by indications of indigence, used occasionally to visit at Kensington House. Their elasticity of back, the frequency and gracefulness of their well-regulated bows, and the perpetual smile upon their wrinkled and emaciated faces, showed that they had something to do with the *vieille cour;* and this conjecture used to be confirmed by the embrace with which they folded the little marquises and counts whom they came to visit. . . . .

I recollect, upon one occasion, having been witness to a very remarkable scene. Monsieur, as he was then called (Charles X.), waited one day, with a large retinue of French nobility, upon the Prince de Broglie. The whole body of the school-boys was assembled to

receive them. We were gathered in a circle at the bottom of a flight of stone stairs that led from the principal room into the play-ground. The future King of France appeared, with his *cortège* of illustrious exiles, at the glass folding-doors which were at the top of the stairs, and the moment he was seen we all exclaimed, with a shrill shout of beardless loyalty, '*Vive le Roi!*' Monsieur seemed greatly gratified by this spectacle, and, in a very gracious and condescending manner, went down amongst the little boys, who were at first awed a good deal by his presence, but were afterwards speedily familiarized to him by the natural benignity of Charles the Tenth. He asked the names of those who were about him, and when he heard them, and saw in the boys by whom he was encompassed the descendants of some of the noblest families of France, he seemed to be sensibly affected. One or two names which were associated with peculiarly melancholy recollections, made him thrill; '*Helas! mon enfant!*' he used to say, as some orphan was brought up to him; and he would then lean down to caress the child of a friend who had perished on the scaffold of the Revolution."*

The pupils, though chiefly, were not, indeed, alto-

* Schoolboy Recollections, &c.

gether of French origin. In the want of places of elementary instruction which then existed in Ireland for the sons of the wealthier classes of the Catholics, many parents were disposed to avail themselves of the advantages held forth by the school at Kensington. One of its earliest pupils was Thomas Kenny, the son of a gentleman residing in Galway, with whom young Sheil contracted a boyish friendship which the difference of their pursuits in after life did not efface from the memory of either. He was, according to Mr. Kenny, at this time a strange, wayward boy, careless and slovenly in dress, and very imperfectly educated. Another of his companions in these school days was Christopher Fitzsimon, with whom he was afterwards associated in public life, and who for many years represented the county of Dublin in Parliament. Mr. Fitzsimon remembers his early quickness of parts and kindliness of disposition. He seemed to be impressed, he says, with strong devotional feelings. These sentiments were no doubt strengthened by the care and kindness shown him during his stay at Kensington by one of whom he has himself left the following grateful reminiscences :—

" M. Molinari, a Genoese, was an exceedingly kind, amiable, and well-informed man. He was the only

one in the whole school that knew a word of Greek. He had been educated, though an Italian, at Prague, and practised as a lawyer. He then became a Jesuit, and was certainly sincerely devoted to religion. Though entirely free from monkish gloom, there was a large infusion of fanaticism in his character. He believed firmly in witchcraft, and was versed in all the mysteries of demonology. . . . Another point on which he was a little weak was the influence of the *Illuminés* in Germany. He improved on Barruel, which was his manual, and regarded Waishoupt as an incarnate fiend. . . . . But with the exception of these strange credulities, he was a most estimable man. He had an heroical disinterestedness of character, and dedicated himself with all the ardour of spiritual chivalry to the cause of the Jesuits, which he regarded as identified with that of true religion. I was a considerable time placed under his care, and am indebted to him for a zealous solicitude for my welfare. He took the greatest and most disinterested pains in giving me instruction, and would devote hours of unremunerated labour (for the salaries of the boys were all paid in to M. le Prince) to the explanation of difficulties, and in clearing the way to knowledge. . . . . Severity towards his pupils he considered a

part of his duty; and he sometimes shed tears at seeing the pain he felt bound to inflict.

"The Père Caperon was a great Oriental scholar, and was regarded as a master of the Arabic language. He was not employed in teaching the boys (an occupation for which he would have been wholly unfit), but in composing essays upon the mysterious literature of the East. It was one of our favourite amusements to disturb him in his studies. A group would collect under his windows, and assail him with all kinds of stormy noises, when he would rush forth with a huge stick, which made us all take to our heels, and woe betide the urchin on whom he first seized. '*Oh, petit malheureux!*' he would exclaim, as he grasped some intruder upon his meditations, and avenged upon him the losses which Oriental learning had sustained by the trespass which we had committed on his meditations . . . . There was one very eloquent preacher, the Père Colman, who was a German by birth, but French in language and manner. He had a most noble bearing; a visage fit for canvas, a deep sonorous voice, and a great command of pure oratorical diction. He was, however, too valuable to be allowed long to remain in so inferior a spot as Kensington House, and was ordered by the

general of the Jesuits to proceed to Russia.* So was Molinari, who acted towards me a part of great kindness and friendship previous to his leaving the establishment. The Prince de Broglie, he informed me, had got himself into great embarrassments, and had made an effort to induce the Jesuits of Stoneyhurst to assist him. With this view he had offered to annex Kensington House to the Anglican province. The English Jesuits were, however, too shrewd to acquiesce in this proposal, and it was manifest the institution must be broken up. Molinari further informed me that he had himself been ordered into the deserts of Siberia, with instructions to penetrate if possible into China as a missionary of the Gospel. He recommended me to write home, and to apprise my friends of what was about to take place, and Stoneyhurst he pointed out as the best seminary which I could select.

"The system of instruction at Kensington was miserably defective. Some attention was paid to composition. . . . There was also some relish manifested for the beauties of the Latin writers, and pains were taken to make the scholars feel the strength of the expression. But arithmetic, geography, history, were all neglected. A worse course of education cannot be well imagined."*

* Schoolboy Recollections, &c.

In the month of October, 1804, he left Kensington, and proceeded to the College of Stoneyhurst, where he was entered as a student on the 24th of that month. Stoneyhurst, formerly the property of the family of Sherbourne, and subsequently purchased by Mr. Weld, and bequeathed by him to the order of Jesuits, is situated near the town of Clitheroe, in Lancashire. From the principal approach, it presents an imposing aspect. The buildings are spacious, although the original design was never carried to completion, and the extensive walks and grounds bespeak the fortunes of its founders. For the most part, the country around it is flat and uninteresting, the principal feature being the dark ridge of Pendle, which stretches from east to west, at no great distance. The sombre aspect of his new abode was not calculated to dissipate the sense of loneliness which had weighed upon the spirits of the young traveller during his tedious journey from London. The shortening days and the clouded atmosphere, and all the external images around him, combined to cast a chill over his susceptible and imaginative temperament. What sort of place was this? Was its discipline harsh and rigorous? Were its pursuits and pastimes darkened by ascetic gloom? Should he find new

friends and sympathising companions there, or only fellow-subjects under an exacting and unyielding rule of learning? A thousand questions rose within him as he entered the gates of the college; and anxiously his quick eye sought for something that might suggest, in part at least, a solution in what he saw around him. It was not long, however, before his first misgivings were forgotten.

As French was invariably spoken at Kensington school, when he first went to Stoneyhurst he had, in a great degree, forgotten his own language, while he spoke French freely. "His first appearance," says one of his schoolfellows, "I recollect well: it was strikingly grotesque. His face was pale and meagre; his limbs lank; his hair starting upwards from his head like a brush; a sort of muscular action pervading his whole frame; his dress foreign; his talk broken English, and his voice a squeak. Add to this a pair of singularly brilliant eyes, lighting up all the peculiarities of his figure, and you have before you the boy Sheil. His performances were at first as singular as his person. His efforts to kick a football were *sui generis*. He never engaged in the game along with the other boys, but kept aloof, occupied in reading or walking

about the playground; but whenever the ball was thrown across his path, he used to dart at it with a frantic energy, his legs and arms all pretty equally on the stretch, so that it was out of the question to determine with what limb he would assail the ball, until a kick at it, probably from the left leg, solved the problem; and then back he would go to his reading, amid the yells of the urchins, enraged at his disturbing their game."*

The pupils, who numbered about one hundred and fifty at the period in question, were distributed into six classes. The same master usually continued to preside over his class through its several stages, which were denoted by the names of Abecedarians, figures, grammar, syntax, poetry, and rhetoric. "It was my good fortune," observes Mr. Sheil, "to be placed at first in the class of the Rev. Father Laurenson, who was an excellent Latin scholar, and had besides a strong relish for English composition. He was an excellent man, with an exceedingly good heart, with generous and honourable feelings, and entirely free from the suppleness which has been attributed, but in my mind erroneously, to the body to which he belonged . . . The Rev. Mr. Laurenson was a great gaunt man, with a deep

* Mr. Justice Ball; letter to the author.

sonorous voice, and a countenance in which it was easy to discover his vigorous intellect, his open and manly nature, and an irascibility which, with all his efforts and with the discipline of Loyola, he found it impossible to conquer. Father Laurenson was obliged from, I believe, ill-health, to give up the class, and was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. Brooks . . . He was, when he became the teacher of the class to which I belonged, a young man of manners, which were pushed, perhaps, to the utmost limit of refinement. His taste in literature was highly cultivated, and his mind was full of examples from the best authors, and of precepts from the best ancient and modern critics. He took exceedingly great pains in exciting an admiration for the beauties of the classical writers which it was his office to explain; and in rendering them into English he enforced the necessity of preserving the strength and the colour of the Greek or Latin phrase.

"To English composition he insisted that particular attention should be paid. He had studied it, and made himself complete master of the principles on which it depends. There were two books in perpetual use, one was 'Walker's Elocution,' and another—it is not much known, though it contains excellent matter—called, 'Cheirŏnomia,' written by the Rev.

Mr. Austin . . . At Stoneyhurst, if a few important branches of education were not as much attended to as they ought to have been, a neglect of this useful and plêasurable accomplishment was not among its faults. The passion which prevailed at this school for recitation soon extended itself to acting. A private theatre was built at the expense of the students, under the superintendence of the masters."* From each class, the boys who had made the most proficiency in elocution were selected by its master to take parts in the performances. On one occasion young Sheil was passed over as not being qualified to fill even a subordinate part. "As might be expected, he felt and made apparent his boyish disappointment on the occasion. The fact was, that even then he was persuaded that he was more competent to give effect to dramatic performance than any of the boys whom the master had selected; and it was not clear to him that he had not as good a notion of dramatic composition as the master himself."† There were also exhibitions called 'Academics,' where the boys were examined in Greek and Latin, and recitèd their own verses before a great concourse of people. "These shows tended greatly to excite emulation and that

* Schoolboy Recollections, &c., &c.

† Letter of Mr. Justice Ball, already quoted.

love of distinction which the Jesuits had a particular faculty in creating. Between students of different social rank no distinction was ever shown. The only claim of superiority among class-fellows recognised by their teachers was, that asserted by pre-eminence in intellectual attainments; and the son of the tradesman and the heir to an ancient earldom were treated, both in school and play-hours, perfectly alike. The tone of national sentiment encouraged was also very different from that which prevailed at Kensington House. When the first tidings of Trafalgar were brought, cheers were given by the masters, which were unanimously echoed by their pupils. Several holidays were given in honour of the event; and a poem in its celebration was composed by one of the professors, and publicly recited in the great hall."*

The Irish pupils at this time were not nearly so numerous as those of English birth. A good deal of rivalry appears to have existed between them. It prevailed in the competition of the class, and occasionally broke forth in angry gestures and exclamations in the playground, when parties at football not unfrequently were formed according to national divi-

* Schoolboy Recollections, &c., &c.

sions. "In general the English were successful, because they showed more prudence and self-control. The Irish were so precipitate and headlong as constantly to miss the victory when they were on the point of gaining it. In the school exercises, wherever attention and assiduity were required, the English were generally superior; but in matters of display the Irish went far beyond them. In recitation, in prose as well as verse, the difference between them was especially remarkable,—the Irish usually showing greater flexibility and a more musical ear."*

Young Sheil continued as a student at Stoneyhurst until the 15th of November, 1807. In the year 1805, we find him occupying the second place in the class of poetry, Henry Beaumont, who is described as a person of remarkable ability, retaining the first place throughout the entire of the classical course. Among his class-fellows was Richard Cruise, afterwards well known and esteemed as a member of the Irish Bar. On quitting Stoneyhurst it was the wish of his father that he should become a student of Trinity College, Dublin; and in November, 1807, he entered as a pupil of Doctor Wall, now Vice-Provost of the University. As he did not reside within the walls of

* Schoolboy Recollections, &c.

the college, he came less under the personal observation of his tutor than others of his class. Doctor Wall's recollections of him, however, confirm the impression of his sound classical scholarship. For science he never appears to have shown any particular capacity or addiction. During the "Freshman" years of his collegiate course his vacations were spent chiefly at Bellevue, whose surrounding scenes and associations he was more than ever capable of enjoying. Full of vivacity and humour, and with the schoolboy reputation among his family and friends of possessing talents of no common order, he would often realize the fond dreams his mother had long cherished regarding him, fixing the attention of his seniors by his keenness and originality in argument; and when worsted in more serious controversy, by his powers of oversetting the gravity of the discussion, and enlisting on his side the sympathy of the less learned listeners by some audacious stroke upon the bell of laughter. There was something grotesque and extravagant in the ideas with which at will he delighted to perplex the sober politicians and priests of the old school that used to assemble at his father's table. He loved to start new questions under the thin disguise of seeking for information, and when he had drawn forth some solemn

answer which only served to sound the shallowness of the provincial sage, he would come out with a showy if not always very substantial stock of objections, difficulties, and citations of authority to which there was seldom at hand any ready answer. In all this there was no doubt much to spoil the taste and warp the habit of his mind. His father—who was fond of legal argumentation, and who unluckily for himself had acquired the reputation of possessing a very competent knowledge of law—enjoyed at heart the signs of future capabilities, as he deemed them, of winning distinction at the bar, for which his son's inclinations as well as his own desires had destined him. As was inevitable, perhaps, there would often arise points of difference between them on matters of opinion, when the eagerness and abruptness of the collegian would overpass the bounds of deference to age and to experience; and then parental authority would assert itself in a way deeply mortifying to a proud and easily depressible nature. While the cloud of discontent hung over him by which collisions of this sort were generally followed, he would betake himself to the river side or the more unfrequented paths that lay through the neighbouring fields, and busy with the images of his own prolific fancy, spend long hours

in earnest converse with the imaginary beings whom his dramatizing brain was ever ready to conjure up.

His love of the drama and dramatic representation under every form, constituted from his earliest years a prominent feature in his character. His thoughts, words, and gestures involuntarily took dramatic shape, and this characteristic was frequently more observable in the complete undress of conversation with a familiar friend than in the presence of a numerous company. It was not any craving after admiration that gave thrilling intensity to his accents, and caused them to be accompanied by vehement looks and gestures. He was by nature an actor in the true sense of the term—not a mechanician of emotion of other men's conceiving—but one whose mind was full of emotions of its own, the echoes of which rang forth unbidden in the piercing tones of his rapid but impressive articulation.

At a fancy ball given at Waterford, he appeared in the character of a French quack-doctor; and sustained his part with much *éclat*. He spoke the language with more volubility probably than precision. This was the case at a later period, according to the testimony of more than one who had abundant opportunities of judging. But one can readily conceive with how

many subordinate traits suitable to the occasion his recollections of school-days at Kensington may have supplied him; and in pantomimic looks and gesticulations he required no teacher.

While pursuing the course of his studies at the University, the first misfortune that was destined to darken his path suddenly broke over his hitherto cheerful home. His father's early habits of active enterprise had led him to engage in more than one commercial speculation after his return from Spain. Amongst the rest, he had embarked a considerable sum (stated variously at from 10,000*l.* to 15,000*l.*) in a mercantile house in Dublin, which was extensively engaged in the Mediterranean trade. This he did under what was termed the Anonymous Partnership Act, which was passed in 1782, by the Parliament of Ireland, with a view of encouraging mercantile enterprise, by securing to capitalists who would not risk their entire fortunes the protection of limited liability. By the provisions of this statute, the name of a partner so contributing to the capital stock was not to appear in any act of the firm; and he, on the other hand, was inhibited from taking any part in the direction or control of the business. The courts of law held any infraction

of these conditions to amount to a defeasance of the limitation of liability. As few, however, availed themselves of the privileges thus afforded them,* no very precise notions seem to have generally prevailed as to what would and what would not constitute a renunciation of the limited and anonymous character of a partnership. Mr. Sheil unfortunately undertook to judge for himself on the point; and after the house with which he was connected, as above stated, had failed, the creditors sought to render him fully liable: and this they ultimately succeeded in doing, by proving that on one or two occasions he had been seen in the counting-house, taking part in the management of the concern. The effect of this decision was almost equivalent to his ruin. He was compelled to break up his establishment, and reduce his mode of living from one of luxury to that of the most frugal expenditure. He was no longer able to afford the expenses necessary for his son's collegiate studies; and these must have been interrupted for a considerable time, if not wholly

* Every deed of partnership under the statute in question was required to be registered; and by a reference to the department in which the memorials of such deeds are enrolled, it appears that from the year 1782 to 1854, but 523 such deeds have been thus registered.

abandoned, but for the kindness and liberality of a relative, who spontaneously undertook to make Richard an allowance of a hundred pounds a year, until he should have been called to the bar. Doctor William Foley, by whom this generous offer was made, was a physician of eminence in Waterford, where he had acquired in his profession a considerable fortune. He was connected through her mother's family with that of Mrs. Sheil, and had long been the intimate friend of her husband. In a letter dated 17th May, 1809, the young collegian warmly acknowledged the obligation thus conferred on him; and in a postscript his father added his own expressions of gratitude. He wished, however, that the allowance should not exceed eighty guineas a year, which would, he thought, suffice to enable Richard to complete his terms at the University and the Inns of court; and this sum appears to have been paid by Doctor Foley during the four following years.

In the autumn of the same year, Bellevue, together with some property which lay contiguous to it, were sold for the sum of 28,000*l.* to Mr. Nicholas A. Power, in whose possession they still remain. Mr. Sheil and his family removed to Dublin, where they continued to reside during the remainder of his life.

CHAPTER II.

1810—1813.

Historical Society—The Catholic question—Speeches in 1811—Personal appearance and manner—Lincoln's Inn—Quarrel with his uncle—Public events of 1812—The Veto—Speech at the Catholic Board—Reply to O'Connell.

DURING the latter part of his academic course, and while he was pursuing his studies for the bar, young Sheil was a constant attendant at the meetings of the Historical Society, which then were held within the walls of the University. Notwithstanding the latter circumstance, and the existence of a rule forbidding any direct reference to modern politics, strong opinions on the great subjects that have at all times divided thoughtful and inquiring minds, often found expression in the animated debates of the society. Regard for collegiate authority, which marked with jealous vigilance its proceedings, (and by which they were even-

tually, in a moment of public excitement, summarily suppressed), prevented the use of party appellations and the open recognition of party distinctions. But the banners of Conservatism and Liberalism, though they waved unseen, were followed by the eye of youthful faith with ardour and enthusiasm. There were cheers and counter cheers for eloquent allusions, thinly veiled, to the stirring topics of the day, and not a few of those who afterwards bore a prominent part in Irish politics and polemics, were arrayed against one another in this preparatory school of earnest controversy. Looking back on these scenes of ingenuous and seemingly resultless excitement, some may perhaps have been tempted to regard them as little better than undress rehearsals of parts which, to be played well and effectively, require a greater audience and a more enkindling scene. But in the chill of after life, and amid its disenchantments, we commit few stranger errors than those which arise from the obliteration of early thoughts and immature convictions. If memory did not so frequently doze and deceive us, we should read, with exquisite sympathy for our former selves, any chance record that might remain of the intellectual struggles of our early days—struggles not intellectual only, but sus-

tained oftentimes by as much of moral energy and earnestness and feeling, as those more profitable and pompous controversies in which we mingle when our hairs are grey. That youth and inexperience are sometimes led to form hasty opinions, and hotly to express them, and that thus a whole course of life is sometimes determined unadvisedly, is doubtless true. But there is little wisdom in seeking to ignore the depth and strength of the impressions which reading, however limited, and observation of existing circumstances, however circumscribed, form in the fresh and germinating soil that is only to be found in youthful breasts. In a letter, written after an interval of forty years, by one of the most eloquent and earnest of Mr. Sheil's cotemporaries in the Historical Society, the writer says: "His opinions and mine were quite as opposite at that time as at any part of our future lives." And an incident, in itself trivial, may serve to illustrate the importance seemingly attached by him to the divisions taken on questions of peculiar interest in the society. A gentleman whose acquaintance he had made during a journey from London to Dublin, still recollects the anxiety which he evinced to arrive before a given hour; and as the passage of the Channel was at that time a matter of no little uncer-

tainty, his impatience became uncontrollable as day went down, and there seemed no prospect of the vessel reaching the harbour. Late in the evening they did arrive, however, to his great satisfaction, when, leaving his luggage to the care of his new acquaintance, he hurried away in order that, if possible, he might gain the college gates in time to vote upon the question which was that night pending.

"I have a full recollection," observes the writer of the letter above quoted, "of Mr. Sheil. His powers as an orator were, at that time, very imperfect. His fancy was very vivid, and his speeches more remarkable for their display of imagination than of argument. His voice was weak and squeaking, and his manner very theatrical; but he was evidently a youth of very promising talent, of very ardent mind, and one who was likely to be distinguished in his future career. He was always listened to with pleasure; his feelings were excitable; and I recollect, on one occasion, his making a sharp and clever retort to some remarks which I had ventured to make, on an allusion to modern politics, contrary to a rule of the society."* This estimate of his undeveloped powers is certainly much more favourable than that which he himself was

* Letter to the author, dated 30th December, 1853.

accustomed to express when, late in life, he looked back upon his college days. No one could be more conscious of the physical defects with which Nature, like a step-dame, seemed resolved to thwart his boyish ambition to be an orator. His early efforts in debate, like those of Curran, were often unsuccessful, and owing probably to a similar cause, namely, that of precipitancy in his mode of utterance.*

No art, indeed, could soften the shrillness of his voice; but care in the attainment of an elaborately distinct articulation, and the adoption of a marked and modulated tone of utterance, redeemed, though it could not cure, the faults of the vocal organ. The habit of speaking frequently in public subsequently strengthened his voice, which, though never sufficient to enable him to address effectively a large assemblage in the open air, seldom failed completely to fill any edifice, however spacious or lofty. Of the theatrical character of his elocution more will be said hereafter. It is probable that, at no period of his life, was he disposed to regard it as a fault, however anxious he may have been to avoid the imputation of permitting it to degenerate into extravagance.

He was not discouraged by his want of success in

* Life of Curran, by his Son. Vol. i., p. 34.

the mimic field of party battle. He longed to mingle in the actual strife of politics, conscious, in some degree, that his powers, which he used half-jestingly to say were those of "popular inflammation," needed for their exercise the real field of popular grievance and popular passion. From the discussion of historical and speculative questions he began to turn his thoughts to those of the day, and more especially to that round which in Ireland all others long grouped themselves—the removal of religious disabilities. The position of the Catholic question at this period was strange and anomalous. One of the chief inducements to the Union held out by the British Ministers, had been the facility it would afford for the final settlement of that great controversy. Lord Castlereagh, on whom, as Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant, the conduct of the more important transactions connected with the carrying of the Union devolved, subsequently avowed that "he had been authorized, in 1799, to communicate with the Catholic clergy. It was then distinctly understood that the political claims of the Catholics must remain for the consideration of the Imperial Parliament; but the expediency of making, without delay, some provision for their clergy, under proper regulations, was

fully recognised. The result of their deliberation was laid before Government in certain resolutions, signed by ten of their bishops, including the four metropolitans, in January, 1799."*

When the Union was carried, Mr. Pitt felt bound in honour to requite the aid he had obtained from the hierarchy and upper classes of the Catholics in carrying a measure so difficult and so important, by urging without delay upon the king the fulfilment of the expectations held forth. George III., however, was not to be moved, and refused his assent; the Minister, in consequence, resigned, and remained out of office until 1804. On his death, Lord Grenville and Mr. Fox, who had uniformly advocated the claims of the Catholics, were called to power. They formed an administration strong in talent and in influence, but not strong enough to attempt the task of Catholic emancipation. To use the words of Mr. Fox, "they were desirous, by the removal of Lord Redesdale [from the Chancellorship of Ireland], Mr. Foster, and justices of the peace whose conduct had been notoriously oppressive, to show their good intentions; and steps still more important would be taken

* Speech of Lord Castlereagh, in House of Commons, 25th May, 1810.

to do for the Catholics all that was consistent with existing bad laws, by giving them all the share in the government of their country" that Ministers could give. But they despaired of success in any immediate attempt at remedial legislation, "unless they could have active assistance from a quarter in which to look for passive acquiescence was perhaps more than they could reasonably expect." Mr. Fox, therefore, advised that the Catholic petition should not be brought forward in 1807, as its supporters were certain to be in a minority, and the result might be to wreck the administration. At the same time he declared that "if, notwithstanding their wishes it should be presented, he would support it with all his power."* His death, in the autumn of the same year, was speedily followed by the formation of a cabinet in which the opponents of all concession, including Lord Liverpool, Lord Eldon, and Mr. Perceval, constituted a decided preponderance. Mr. Canning and Lord Castlereagh asserted, indeed, their individual right to express, whenever the subject was brought forward, their dissent from their colleagues. But the Secretary of the Treasury treated their mutinous eloquence as

* Letter to Mr. Ryan, in Lord Holland's Memoirs of the Whig Party. Vol. i., p. 214.

sweet-smelling salve for the discipline his whip inflicted on thin-skinned supporters: and there were those who did not scruple to say that such manifestations of fruitless freedom were meant to serve as a blind for compliance in other matters of more immediate moment.* Be that as it may, however, the question seemed to be fairly a-ground; and no one could suggest any better way of rescuing it from its desperate position than that of ridding it of some of those terrors with which, to the minds of many, it seemed burthened.

And thus arose the incidental controversy about what was termed "the Veto." When applied to by Mr. Pitt, on the eve of the Union, the Catholic prelates above alluded to had adopted a series of resolutions, declaring that a provision through Government for the Roman Catholic clergy, competent and secured, ought to be thankfully accepted; and that in the appointment of the prelates to vacant sees,

* At the table of Mr. Bushe, when Solicitor-General for Ireland, Lord Lansdowne expressed, soon after the close of the session of 1810, a more charitable estimate of Lord Castlereagh's conduct in this respect, adding that "by his recent speech on the Catholic question, he had *made* great character." Chief Baron O'Grady instantly replied, "Then, if he has, depend upon it he'll *spend* it like a gentleman."

such interference of Government as might enable it to be satisfied of the loyalty of the persons appointed was just, and ought to be agreed to under certain regulations, therein stated, regarding the mode of election by the clergy of each diocese, &c.; and that when the names of the candidates duly chosen should have been forwarded to the Government, if Government had any proper objection against such candidates, the president of the election should be informed thereof within one month of the presentation, who, in that case, should convene the electors (the parochial clergy) to the election of another candidate. But inasmuch as by the discipline of the Catholic church these conditions, before being entered into, needed the sanction of the Holy See, such sanction the Roman Catholic prelates of the kingdom should, as soon as may be, use their endeavours to procure.* These resolutions were first referred to in Parliament by Mr. Grattan, on 25th of May, 1808. Mr. Ponsonby, who had filled the office of Chancellor in Ireland in the previous year, declared his belief that the terms therein indicated would be readily acquiesced in by leading persons, both lay and clerical, among the Catholics. Lord Grenville, in the House of Lords,

* Butler's Hist. Memoirs of the Catholics. Vol. iv., p. 151, et seq.

confirmed what had been thus stated in the Commons, and both friends and foes conceived that a great effect favourable to concession was likely to be produced thereby. In September, 1808, a resolution, however, was come to by the Irish Catholic prelates, declaring that it was inexpedient to introduce any alteration in the mode theretofore observed in the nomination of bishops. When appealed to as to the exact import of this declaration, by Sir Edward Bellew and Lord Southwell, Archbishop O'Reilly explained that the prelates did not mean to decide that the admission of a veto on the part of the Crown, with the consent of the Holy See, would be contrary to the doctrine of the Roman Catholic church, or to any practice or usage essentially or indispensably connected with the Roman Catholic religion; candour, however, and truth obliged him to say that the declaration was dictated by a well-founded apprehension that the concession in question might eventually be attended with consequences dangerous to the Roman Catholic religion; such danger, in his mind, and in the opinion of several other prelates, was of a temporary nature, resulting from existing circumstances, though many persons supposed it to arise from the nature of the measure, thus giving to the resolution

of the bishops a meaning it did not deserve. But by the opponents of emancipation no little use was made of the last-named resolution. Lord Grey and Mr. Windham, foreseeing the advantage to which it would be turned in debate, conferred with the heads of the English Catholic party as to the means of conciliating the differences which were likely to arise on the point in question. But it was not in the power of individuals to allay the spirit of discord that had already begun to display itself. Two parties were gradually formed—the Vetoists, comprising the greater portion of the educated and opulent classes, who despaired of obtaining the relaxation of civil disabilities without some ecclesiastical guarantees; and the Anti-Vetoists, who rejected all compromise, and declared themselves ready to wait for emancipation until it should be gained without conditions. The former had the sympathy and confidence of all who in Parliament had hitherto striven disinterestedly for the assertion of sectarian liberty: the latter were sustained by popular feeling in Ireland, and were led by O'Connell. Mr. Grattan in 1809 and 1810 presented, as before, the national petitions for relief; but he urged, upon all occasions, the necessity of mutual concessions if anything practical was looked for.

For a time, a disposition was shown in Ireland to follow this advice. In the Catholic committee, which had been organized for the purpose of directing the general affairs of the body, persons who differed widely on the admissibility of compromise met and co-operated freely. The heads of many of the old aristocratic families mingled with the merchants and professional men, with whom they were united by the common tie of disfranchisement on account of their faith. In point of substance and respectability, the periodical meetings of the committee could generally boast of an influential platform, to which, however, the character of the bulk of the assembly was seldom found to correspond. There were, indeed, widely diffused feelings of discontent, if not of disaffection, but habits of political deliberation among the mass of the trading and agricultural classes, as yet there were none; there were a few malcontent nobles, a few malcontent lawyers, and a few malcontent merchants, who, whenever they met in public, were sure to be vociferously cheered; but effective organization with a settled purpose was a thing unknown. Towards the close of 1810 an idea seems to have been adopted, that without infringing the existing law which forbade the assembling together of persons professing or claiming to

be elected delegates from different parts of the kingdom, it might be possible to constitute a permanent society which, practically, would possess the influence and wear the aspect which the legislature. had jealously interdicted. A plan was publicly proposed by which the committee should in future embrace, beside other persons individually joining it, all Catholic peers, bishops, baronets, peers' sons, and the surviving delegates of the Convention of 1793, together with a certain number of individuals chosen by each county, and by each parish of the metropolis. Great expectations were formed of the effect of this project, which Mr. O'Connell had pronounced to be perfectly legal. A more numerous attendance than previously, marked the public assemblies periodically summoned by the committee; and at several of these many persons of distinction among liberal Protestants lent their assistance.

Richard Sheil had for some time been a listener to these proceedings, and he became at length impatient to take part in them. On the 9th February, at a meeting where Lord Ffrench presided, a resolution was moved to select seven persons who should accompany Lord Fingal to London, where they were to confer with members of both Houses of Parliament, and to

act in the capacity of national representatives, on all questions of detail that might arise during the session. It was obvious that upon the selection so made the fate of the question of compromise might possibly depend; and the mutual distrust between Vetoists and Anti-Vetoists, hitherto suppressed, threatened to burst forth anew. After many had spoken, a young man, carelessly dressed, and whose appearance was unknown to a majority of those present, asked for a hearing. The tone of his voice, and something wild and unsettled in his look, did not at first favourably impress his questioning auditory. What he said, moreover, though conciliatory in its tenor, was uttered with a spasmodic abruptness and vehemence, calculated rather to provoke a laugh than to take admiration by surprise. As he proceeded, however, his earnestness began to win its way; and some, more impressible than those around them, gave him an encouraging cheer. The effect of this was to render his manner more collected, and his articulation more clear. "The *Edinburgh Review* had cast ridicule upon them, as a mere mob of orators, without a substantial following, or any true representative character. The contemplated mission to England," he said, "would tend to remove these aspersions, and correct whatever

misapprehensions might exist as to the character of those who commanded a guiding influence in their affairs. They would best accomplish this by sending men of education and of fortune, who, as ambassadors from Ireland, would conduct the cause of aggrieved and injured millions. The root of their power was indeed hidden in that subsoil of society which oppression was accustomed to regard with peculiar contempt; but at least they would demonstrate that there were branches distinguishable and distinguished, which raised their heads as proudly as the best of those who affected to deem them worthy of being treated with sectarian contumely and disdain." After dwelling on this subject at some length, in a strain of fanciful, but striking and picturesque embellishment, he proceeded to answer a somewhat disingenuous objection which had been raised, that those who were to accompany Lord Fingal might be regarded by his Lordship as spies set upon his conduct. "There was no need to fear anything of the kind. The persons who were chosen, he would feel were sent to act as aids, not as sentinels around him. Peers as well as Commoners ought to be selected, for as the latter would have access to members of the Lower House friendly to their cause, so the former would most fitly represent

them with the House of Lords, as claiming, by constitutional right and ancient usage, to take their hereditary place in that Assembly in which he trusted they would yet live to see them recognised as no unworthy ornaments. Their cause was indeed that of the nation; that of the peasant as well as of the peer. The rights of humanity were violated by the penal code, and the cause of humanity was as immutable and comprehensive as the wide and permanent heaven. If they sent seven men they would send seven trumpets which would sound a note of summons and of warning at the gates of oppression. At the trumpets' sound, the walls of Jericho would fall, and the stronghold of corruption and exclusion sink into the dust." Adverting to an address to the Prince of Wales, he said, "that he still, as an Irishman, desired to place confidence in the disposition of his Royal Highness. Suspicion was an evil counsellor at all times. The serpent was not suffered by nature to bask on their shores; let them not, then, harbour that distrust whose coil was more insidious, and whose tongue was more full of poison. All, however, would depend on the preservation of unanimity among themselves. If they were either to be successful or to be happy in the enjoyment of success, they

must be tolerant towards each other, and united. Rome, after the civil wars in Italy, would have built a temple to Freedom; but no, she did what was wiser and better. She built a temple to Concord, because concord leads to freedom." Much applause greeted the young orator when he sat down. The reports published in the newspapers of the time were very imperfect; and it is only in fragmentary portions that we are able to form any judgment of the whole. Some weeks later he spoke again at an aggregate meeting held in Fishamble-street Theatre, and which was attended by many peers and commoners of distinction. The subject was, an address to the Prince Regent, whom the Parliament of Ireland had, in 1788, been willing to invest with plenary rights and powers of sovereignty, while the majority of the Parliament of England, swayed by the advice of Mr. Pitt, would have limited his authority by restrictions. Mr. Sheil believed that "the same feelings which prevailed at that time, still animated the public mind. There was no longer, indeed, an Irish Parliament, but there was still an Irish people, who looked with confidence to the heir of the Crown as ready, when opportunity should serve, to facilitate their attainment of freedom. They wished to show that there was no

French party in Ireland, as had been recently alleged; and if the occasion should ever arise, it would be found by the usurping tyrant of France that he had no allies among the Catholic inhabitants of the realm. Even though denied a participation in the privileges of the constitution, they were not insensible to its blessings: with how much more zeal would they be found ready to fight for their country, when politically as well as socially they should have a country to fight for." Among those present on the occasion was the Knight of Kerry, the late Mr. Maurice Fitzgerald, who complimented the young speaker highly, and said, he hoped one day to see him in the House of Commons. Just twenty years later the anticipation was fulfilled. A more cautious and accomplished critic was struck with the indications of original thought and expression which the reports, imperfect as they were, of his early speeches contained. Mr. Alexander Knox, with whose life and correspondence the public have since become acquainted, happened to be in Dublin at the time, and expressed a wish to see the youthful demagogue. Pleased with his simplicity and enthusiasm, he took some pains to point out the principal faults of immaturity in his style, but added many kind words of encouragement, which were not thrown away.

His personal appearance and bearing at this time are described—by one who mentions his having first seen him at a county meeting, held in the spring of the same year, at the Court House of Kilmainham—as grave and self-possessed. Though hardly numbering twenty years, he looked nearer thirty, and seemed as if he felt that he was one day to enact a part. In his recent displays, he had attracted much attention by his force of phrase and novelty of elocution. His figure was thin, but square and compact. It would probably have appeared large and muscular on the stage, for which many thought he had considerable qualifications. The crowd became very dense, and it was manifest that the place where the meeting was to have been held could not afford room to one half of the persons likely to be assembled. Some one proposed an adjournment to an open space adjoining, which was resisted by those who had obtained good seats within the building. At length Sheil undertook the task of persuading these reluctant persons to surrender their advantage, and take their chance with others. What the entreaties of others had failed in, he readily accomplished, and he never spoke better than on this trivial occasion.

Having completed his collegiate course, he took his

degree of A.B. in July, 1811. On the 13th of November, in the same year, he entered as a student of Lincoln's Inn, where he continued to keep terms during the two subsequent years, preparatory to being called to the Irish bar.

During his residence in London he became a member of The Eccentrics, a debating club, to which Canning and several of his cotemporaries once belonged. His powers as a debater were probably much improved by his practice in this society, where a tone prevailed wholly different from that to which he had been previously accustomed. Fancy was less valued; and argument more, in the forensic club of Lincoln's Inn that in the politico-religious society of Dublin University. The moral atmosphere was less electric; but, to the intellect of the future lawyer, its air was more bracing.

His father's brother, Richard, was then living in London, and during his first winter in the metropolis he appears to have resided with him. "Uncle Dick" was a good-natured man, but, like others of his family, somewhat choleric and fretful. The recent disturbances in Spain had compelled him to quit the land which had long been that of his adoption; and he had suffered at the same time certain pecuniary losses,

which had not contributed to improve his temper. Uncle and nephew did but ill agree. The student was wayward, and not a little vain of his premature exploits in the demagogic line; while the old man was, doubtless, peevish about trifles, and disposed to be authoritative in tone, without the possession of authority. After various little disputes and some noisy altercations, matters came at length to a crisis, and early in 1812, Richard the younger quitted his uncle's roof, and betook himself to the paternal home. He soon repented, however, of this foolish quarrel. His father could not or would not supply him with the means of returning to London after Easter, and he began to fear lest he should lose the ensuing term. Meanwhile "Uncle Dick's" anger passed away; he began, perhaps, to think that he had been somewhat too hasty, and he offered to receive his nephew as an inmate in his house once more. Richard gratefully accepted the kind offer; but being still without money for travelling expenses and other necessaries, he felt that he had no other resource than that of which he had already so largely availed himself. He applied to Dr. Foley for a loan of twenty pounds, telling him, without reserve, the nature of his perplexity, and penitentially taking to himself the whole

of the blame. "My uncle's extreme kindness," he said, "should have induced me to forgive those fits of anger into which an unfortunately irascible temper sometimes betrays him. Upon one occasion, however, my feelings got the better of my prudence, and hurried me into a warmth of expression which I had afterwards too much reason to regret. Being obliged to leave him, and having no money to support myself in a town so expensive as London, I was necessitated to return instantly to Dublin. I received on Saturday a letter from my uncle, requesting that I would excuse the intemperance of his passion, and offering to receive me with renovated cordiality. However, I have not a sum equal to the expenses of my journey and the purchase of a few books, and I cannot press my father for assistance in his present distressed circumstances; indeed, he has given me to understand that he will not furnish me with the means of going to England, as it was my own fault that I should have left it. The observation is but too true." He deprecated the idea of his relatives supposing that he wished to fall back upon the original terms of the offer made by Doctor Foley on the eve of his quitting Bellevue, and he undertook to repay the loan as soon as his means should enable

him. His request was granted, and he lost no further time in returning to England. His journey was interrupted in consequence of a severe cold, caught by his exposure to heavy rain as he travelled on the outside of the stage coach from Holyhead to Shrewsbury, where he was forced to remain for several days before he could proceed further. The circumstance is alluded to in a letter to Doctor Foley, written from London, on the 6th of May, in which he warmly acknowledges the forgiving and the affectionate reception he met with from his uncle. In the same letter are some general remarks on the politics of the day, and the existing state of parties. Government and Opposition seemed to him alike destitute of any strong hold on popular regard, and were chiefly distinguishable by their conflicting opinions on the Catholic question. Its friends out of doors were at the time full of hope of its success; and in their justification an anecdote is mentioned by him, which, if correct, curiously illustrates the fallaciousness of political prophecies, even when the seers are amongst the most thoroughly initiated in statecraft, and the place of their oracular mutterings the steps of the throne. At the conclusion of a recent debate in the House of Lords, Mr. Sheil states that the Marquis Wellesley, addressing a friend of

his* who stood behind the woolsack, said—"Sir, if the Catholics conduct their cause with propriety, I insure you success in three years, perhaps in one."

Throughout their previous disappointments the Catholics had clung to the belief that the Prince Regent was at heart their friend, and that when an opportunity served he would prove the sincerity of his oft-repeated assurances, by calling to power the party whose leaders had lessened their influence with the English people by nothing so much as their readiness to become the apologists of his personal errors. But when, on the death of Mr. Perceval on the 11th of May, the occasion presented itself, these anticipations were speedily dispelled. Not only were Lords Grenville and Grey discarded, but the basis upon which the old administration was re-constituted, under Lord Liverpool, was so narrowed regarding principles, that neither Mr. Canning nor Lord Wellesley would consent to form part of it. In both Houses a resolution was moved by them, proposing a pledge that Parliament would in the ensuing session seriously set about a settlement of the Catholic question; in the Lords it was only lost by one, the numbers being for Lord Eldon's amendment, 125 to 124; but in the

* Probably Mr. Charles Butler.

Commons it was rejected by a large majority. In the course of the autumn a dissolution took place, and "notwithstanding the coalition," writes Sir J. Mackintosh, "of the court, the parsons, and the mob, against all the men of sense in the country,"* the Opposition gained at the elections.

In Ireland, feelings of deep distrust and resentment at the conduct of the Prince found expression in every variety of form. Far from evincing any readiness to adopt the idea of compromise, the popular sentiment was one of vehement hostility to every proposition of what seemed to savour of the Veto. Many individuals, however, of influence and character concurred with those who in the legislature believed it to have become wholly impossible to carry any large measure of relief without some species of "security." Of these were Mr. Grattan, Mr. Plunket, and Mr. Canning. On the 25th February, 1813, Mr. Grattan brought forward the question with his usual ability and earnestness; and was supported by Mr. Ponsonby, Lord Castlereagh, Mr. Whitbread, Mr. Canning, and Lord Palmerston. It was on this occasion that Mr. Plunket delivered the celebrated speech of which so many of his contempo-

* Memoirs, vol. ii., p. 263.

raries have recorded their unbounded admiration.* By all, the principle of "securities" was conceded, though in general terms; and upon a division the numbers were, for leave to bring in the bill, 264, against, 224. When the measure was laid before the House, it appeared to Mr. Canning and his friends to be too vague on the point adverted to. He accordingly undertook to frame clauses providing for the exercise of a Veto by the Crown; and to these Mr. Grattan hesitated to give his assent until the opinions of the Catholic body should be known. Meanwhile, the bill was read a second time, by a majority of 42.

After a long and stormy discussion, the Catholic Board, at the instance of Mr. O'Connell, pronounced the conditions to be inadmissible; and the bishops about the same time declared that they likewise considered them highly objectionable. Sooner than abandon all chance of settling the long-vexed question, Mr. Grattan was willing to incur the responsibility of agreeing to the amendments of Mr. Canning.

* "This admirable speech," says Sir J. Mackintosh, "has made more impression than any speech since Mr. Sheridan's, in 1787, on the charge against Hastings respecting the Begums of Oude."—Memoirs, vol. ii., p. 263. See also Lord Dudley's Correspondence.

"Upon my head," he exclaimed, "be the odium of the clauses. To insure the principle of concession, I shall submit to the minor infringements. The alleged unpopularity of the bill can only be temporary."* He was speedily relieved, however, from all further responsibility in the matter. The Speaker, Mr. Abbott, as soon as the House was in committee, moved that the first clause admitting Catholics to Parliament be omitted; and such use was made of the declarations in Ireland against any conditions, that his amendment was carried by 251 to 247. Upon this the bill was at once withdrawn. Disappointment and distraction were the fruits of this strange drama of tantalization. Bitter reproaches and angry recriminations formed the staple of public discussion in Ireland for a long period. Mr. Grattan, dejected and debilitated by ill-health, declined to renew the Parliamentary struggle, which he had found by experience to be alike thankless and unavailing.

At the Catholic Board the battle of the Veto was incessantly renewed. On the hardships by which they were aggrieved in common, and on the difficulties that beset their path to a remedy, all were agreed; but between Vetoists and Anti-Vetoists an interminable

* Debate, 24th May, 1813. Speeches, vol. iv., p. 336.

strife prevailed, and each party anxiously sought to strengthen itself by the aid of new recruits. Among those who enlisted on the side of the former was young Sheil. His name appears in the latter part of this year as a frequent attendant at the meetings of the Board. On the 8th of December he delivered a speech which attracted no little attention at the time. It was against a proposition made by Dr. Drumgoole, intended to assert more stringently than ever the expediency and duty of resisting every kind and description of securities as a condition of emancipation. After some prefatory observations, Mr. Sheil said :—

"This is indeed a debate in which much of Ireland's weal is involved. It has drawn together a numerous assembly of the members of the Board : this room is crowded with men who, although they do not constitute a part of our body, are equally interested in its proceedings.*

"The learned mover bids me to remember that I have a religion to preserve—I hope that I shall never forget it—but does he remember that he has a country to obtain? It is, my Lord, with great reluctance that I enter upon the unfortunate topics which this resolution embraces. But let not the fault be imputed to me—let all the consequences which may result from this discussion rest upon the head of him who has introduced the debate.

* Amongst others who were present, was General Mathew, M.P. for Tipperary, to whose popularity Mr. Sheil in passing paid a just tribute.

It is he who breaks our unanimity. There are many who have assented to the general tenor of our measures, because they thought it better to sacrifice their individual opinions than to dissolve our union. But there is an extreme to which they ought not to be driven. If reason be hunted down by the learned Doctor, reason will turn back and defend herself. Why has he roused this disastrous subject from that oblivious sepulchre where it had enjoyed repose? Why has he, in place of stanching the bleeding of the ulcered wound, why has he torn away its bandages, and, in the spirit of experimental adventure, probed it to the bottom? Why, instead of allowing the arrow to extricate itself, has he poisoned it with new resentments, barbed it with new jealousies, and driven it deeper into the heart? I shall begin by agreeing with the learned Doctor, that nothing can be more absurd than to insist upon securities as a condition of our emancipation. We have already afforded the best securities. The thousands of our countrymen who have perished in the cause of Britain—the battles of which Ireland has paid the bloody price, and of which England has won the renown—these are the glorious evidences of our loyalty. We have endeavoured to appease the irritated genius of the British constitution with the libations of our blood: we have been true to the state even in our servitude. They ask us for a pledge that we shall be faithful to ourselves when we are free. Against what are securities to guard? Against foreign influence? What can give it an operation? Popular Discontent—it is the conductor through which it passes; remove it, and that influence can no longer reach us. Besides, there is no connexion between Catholic emancipation and Catholic securities. Catholic emancipation acts upon the laity—securities upon the clergy. The clergy are to remain in the same state after emancipation, as they are now placed in; how, then, does it happen that securities will be necessary then, and are not necessary now? But, it will be asked, if this is the case, why have our advocates in Parliament entreated us to make these concessions? Why have Lords Wellesley and Castlereagh—why

has Mr. Canning, made them a condition of our liberty? It is not difficult to explain. Because they regard concession as necessary to pass emancipation, though not necessary for the safety of the State. Concession will disarm prejudice—it will take away fear from the fool, and pretext from the knave. The learned Doctor says, that securities are but a pretext: deprive them of it—concession upon our part will pluck out the roots of the antipathies of England. The English are a nation pampered with glory, and their pride must be flattered. The hinges upon which the gates of the constitution are suspended are incrustated with prejudice and bigotry, and concession must be employed to remove their rust before they are opened to us. The Constitution, like the Castle of Necromancy, is guarded with phantoms and chimeras: that ideal monster, Church and State, has been stationed its sentinel; and those phantoms must be dispelled, and that monster must be discomfited, before we can attain the seat of happiness and freedom. The question is thus reduced to a simple form of practical utility. We are to investigate, not whether it is absurd of them to ask, but whether it is wise of us to refuse. This is to be determined by an easy inquiry—would concession be useful in the promotion of our emancipation? I assert that it would; and I appeal to the obvious proof—to the debates in Parliament, and to the petitions against us, almost every one of which is directed against *unconditional* emancipation; nor am I surprised at it, for I own I have not that opinion of the wisdom of mankind which would lead me to conclude that their fears are always built upon a just foundation. I have compassion for the prejudices of all men, but especially of an Englishman. What is his education? He is nursed in a horror for popery—he is taught to hate his neighbour, before he is instructed in the fear of God. When he advances from infancy to childhood, the hunger of his mind is fed with the barbarities of convents: his imagination is conducted down the caverns of inquisitions, and the feeble lamp of reason lowers, and is extinguished in the mental mist and damp that spreads through

the labyrinth of horrors. When he attains maturity, he opens the page of English History, and finds it blackened with the fires of Popish persecution. The learned Doctor has appealed to an unfortunate period of the English History, the reign of John. Let me ask him, whether the perusal of that part of the British annals would not be alone sufficient to consolidate the prejudices against our church, for was not the influence of the Pope the greatest evil of which the Barons complained? Is it then wonderful that when his mind has been thus imbued with hatred, a Protestant should retain, in after-life, those antipathies and those fears which are infused in infancy? Is it matter for surprise that he should look upon Popery with the vague and undefined apprehension with which a child looks upon the dark, and dreads a spectre? He fears—he knows not what—but still he fears. At this the Doctor may, if he thinks proper, be surprised; but if he is, it is at human nature. He may lift up his hands and eyes to heaven, and ask God why he made man so imperfect? It is not our office to inquire whether those fears are rational, but whether they are operative. I will make use of a familiar illustration: what would you think of a traveller who, if he were to meet a mountain in his journey, would sit down at its foot, and instead of endeavouring to ascend it, would enter upon a disquisition why nature had put it in his way? Do we not act thus? securities are an obstacle in our progress to freedom, and in place of endeavouring to surmount that obstacle, we indulge in invectives against them. And, after all, have we much right to complain of the prejudices of others? have we none ourselves? My Lord, we pursue precisely the same conduct as our opponents. They exclaim 'emancipation without securities will ruin our religion;' we cry out 'emancipation with securities will ruin ours.' 'You have nothing to fear,' cries the Doctor; 'you have nothing to fear, retorts the Protestant.' 'The church is in danger,' exclaims the Parson; 'the church is in danger,' re-echoes the Priest. And how long is this melancholy recrimination to continue? How long is our liberty to be procrastinated?

To what period of futurity are we to defer our country's happiness? Does he expect that, by the cogency of his reasoning, or the splendour of his eloquence, he will be able to defeat prejudice?

"But we are told, we shall obtain unqualified emancipation at last. At last! He who consents to be a slave one instant after he can be free, deserves to be a slave for ever. But shall we sacrifice our religion? It is not now, my Lord, after ages of persecution, that Roman Catholics will renounce that faith which has been endeared by suffering. It is not in the last agony of human endurance, when heaven is opening on his eyes, that the martyr will pronounce apostacy. But, great as my regard for my religion is, I will not sacrifice my country's freedom to the mere *possibility* of danger to my religion. This is not a Catholic, it is a Calvinistic resolution. It erects the standard of religious revolt, and calls upon the people to rebel against their spiritual governors. What is become of the learned Doctor's judgment? Could not his sagacity have discovered a sufficient pledge in the integrity of our hierarchy, in the purity of their lives, and the disinterestedness of their motives? What are our clergy to gain by emancipation? Nothing. And is it to be supposed that they will open the door to corruption—become panders to the lust of power, and yield the pure and lovely form of religion to political prostitution? And does he accuse his bishops of this gratuitous kind of guilt? Let me remind him of his own argument, 'What right has Parliament to interfere with religion?' And what right has he to interfere with it? Even if it were exposed to all the perils which he apprehends, there are those whose office is its preservation. Let him remember that he who laid an unconsecrated hand upon the Ark (though it was to prevent its fall) was struck dead. [Loud applause.] But he is not contented with an attack upon our bishops, he is likewise driven, in order that this sagacious resolution may be supported, to the necessity of insulting Henry Grattan by the instructions it contains. That name awakes a

train of exalted thought; and I am happy to have this opportunity of bestowing praise upon the man whose character has of late been vilified by obscure insinuations, for there was none so daring as openly to accuse him. Henry Grattan is truly a great man. When he entered into public life, he found his country without trade and without a legislature; he gave her both her commerce and her independence. Ireland is the creation of his word. It has been said that he was bribed by his country—it was a sublime corruption. His country could not bribe him to do her an injury; he was too much her friend to be her flatterer. Other patriots have given up their lives—he did more, he sacrificed his reputation. Tell me, ye who have beheld him in those wonderful nights when he went forth to fight the battles of his country—ye who saw withered by the lightnings of his mind the cohorts of pension and of place—ye who stood by him when he contended for the liberty of Ireland to her last gasp—follow him in his illustrious career—behold him, like the heroes of the Iliad, still protecting her corpse from profanation, and seeking to obtain for her independence an honourable sepulture in the emancipation of her sons—behold him still in arms for Ireland—and tell me, will ye dare to reproach him? Will ye permit this resolution to be flung in his way? Will ye permit the learned Doctor to dictate his duty to him? Is it from Doctor Drumgoole that Henry Grattan is to receive instructions? But it matters not. He is raised above your reach. The imputations which are cast upon him, the clouds which are exhaled from folly and credulity, and with which it is attempted to obscure the setting of his glory, instead of shrouding his splendour in their vapour and their mist, become impurpled with his light, and gain effulgence from the sinking orb. The subject before us, my Lord, is of so complicated a nature that it is impossible, with so little time as must be allotted to each speaker, to treat it with that method and extent which it demands. I must be contented with glancing at the principal topics which it embraces. I cannot refrain from dwelling upon one point, however—I mean the influence of the

Crown, the increase of which is apprehended from the interference of the Government in the nomination of our bishops. It has always appeared to me preposterous to connect the influence of the Crown with Catholic emancipation; and that we are guilty of the same absurdity as our enemies, in associating Catholic emancipation with securities. What is affected by the influence of the Crown? Freedom. Are we free? No. Therefore we are not affected by it. The members of the Established church are affected by it, and I own I am not so solicitous about the liberty of others when I am myself in bondage; nor will I consent to make a sacrifice of my own freedom, lest that of others should be impaired. I care not about the influence of the the Crown." [Here there were strong symptoms of disapprobation, when Lord Ffrench interposed.]

Mr. Sheil continued: "My Lord, you may permit these men to hiss. It does not wound me. They disgrace themselves. But I will repeat, in defiance of all their clamours, the expression of my conviction. I am not afraid of censure, for there is in the heart of every honest man a court of appeal from the tribunal of public opinion. I repeat it, the influence of the Crown has no connexion with emancipation. I would as soon live under a despotism as under the penal code. Under a despotism, we should enjoy the privilege of spilling our blood and paying our taxes, and perhaps obtain reward if we deserved it. There would be no Parliament, indeed; but that would be of little importance, as we cannot now sit in it. I am astonished, therefore, at this confusion of ideas. I am astonished that my friend Mr. O'Connell should have been guilty of it. Is he, too, contented to sacrifice his liberty to that of others? [Mr. O'Connell exclaimed 'Yes!'] Yes! admirable philanthropy! but miserable patriotism. What, then, is the gentleman at last contented that his children should be slaves? I return, my Lord, to this resolution. It does not object to an alteration in our church, but it objects to the alteration to be made by the legislature; and if the legislature should propose the very alteration of which you

approve, you instantly reject it; and is this the time for such high-plumed and haughty discontents? Is this the language of a man who professes himself the advocate of moderation? Truly, a strange kind of moderation which outrages and insults. I, my Lord, support a moderation of a different kind, though it does not preclude me from a true love of my country. I, too, can feel the miseries of Ireland; but it is because my heart is grieved, even to sadness, at the contemplation of her calamity, that I am resolved to make a sacrifice for her happiness. The end is freedom, and who will say that the means are ignoble? But, my Lord, there is not a man here who does not accord with me in one great principle. Divided as we are by those differences which are inseparable from all human transactions, there is one exalted sentiment, one sublime sensation, in which we all concur—the thirsting after, the ineffable desire of, freedom. The young are elevated by the aspirations of hope, and the old—I have read that an aged man who had been confined in a subterranean dungeon was liberated at his last gasp; he crawled to the gates of his prison, and, as he expired, thanked God that he had seen the sun before he died! And where is he who, before he descends into his grave, does not cherish the holy hope that he may behold the liberation of his country?" [Loud applause.]

When the applause had subsided, Mr. O'Connell rose to reply:—"While the meeting was yet dazzled and warmed with the brilliant and glowing language of his young friend, he rashly offered himself to their consideration. He rashly interposed the cold, dull jargon of the courts—the unanimated and rough dialect of the pleader; but the cause of freedom and of his country would enable him, even him, to unravel the flimsy web of sophistry which was hid beneath

the tinsel glare of meretricious ornament. He admired the splendid talents of his young friend. They were bestowed on him for the highest purposes—they were suited to the greatest and best purposes—to relieve and adorn his country. Let him raise his soul to the elevation of his talents, and not take the puny and pigmy ground of party or division. God and Nature have been bountiful to him. Let him, in recompense, as bountifully give, by consecrating to the service of liberty and Ireland all the fascinations of his fancy, and all the brilliant glories of his genius.

"The proposition goes to declare that, either as Irishmen or as Catholics, they never would consent to allow to the Crown, or the servants of the Crown, any interference in the appointment of their bishops. He (Mr. O'Connell) supported the motion upon both grounds: first, as an Irishman, that this interference would be injurious to public liberty; secondly, that, as a Catholic, it would be destructive of the Catholic religion. . . . . Let the servants of the Crown, then, be content with the patronage they had. It is sufficient for their purpose; and if this addition be but small, let them leave us this small independence, for this little is our all—and great it is, in fact." Mr.

O'Connell continued to argue on the demoralizing influence that would be exercised upon the priesthood and the people by ecclesiastical patronage in the hands of a Government professing a different creed. These sentiments prevailed, and Mr. Sheil's amendment was rejected by a great preponderance of opinion.

CHAPTER III.

1814—1817.

Called to the Bar—Play of *Adelaide*—Curran and Grattan—Pius VII. and the Veto—Political apathy—First marriage—Tragedy of *The Apostate*—The "Quarterly Review."

HAVING kept his terms at Lincoln's Inn, he returned to Ireland full of ambitious hopes connected with his future professional career. He was impatient to assume the privileged garb, yet he hesitated to draw upon the diminished resources of his family for the further expense attendant on being called to the bar. An expedient suggested itself to his mind of which, in secret, he prepared to avail himself. His fondness for the stage, and familiarity with ancient as well as modern drama, had often led him in hours of idleness to try whether he, too, did not possess the gift of tragic verse. Many unfinished scenes lay amongst his papers, and many thoughts and images of a kindred

nature thronged his brain. He would write a play, and take it when finished to Miss O'Neil, and between its intrinsic merits and the witchery of her acting, he would make the money he wanted, and, possibly, fame too. During the winter months he was occupied in the execution of this project; but January came before it was completed. His father was as unwilling as himself to defer his initiation as one of the legal craft, and he was admitted a member of the Irish bar on the first day of Hilary term, 1814.

Soon afterwards he presented his play to the manager of Crow-street Theatre for his approval. It was accepted. Some few alterations and curtailments were made at the suggestion of Miss O'Neil, and to the young author's infinite delight she undertook to represent the character he had intended for her. "*Adelaide; or, the Emigrants,* written by a young gentleman of this city," was advertised for the 19th of February. The house was full, and in good humour. The celebrated actress played her part to perfection, and the other performers sustained theirs with credit. One or two passages, expressive of elevated feeling, and clothed in pure and eloquent language, caught the attention of the audience, and ere the third act closed, the success of the piece

was beyond the reach of doubt. Who that has felt or witnessed the first success of all-believing, all-attempting "two-and-twenty," will fail to appreciate the keenness of the sense of mingled pride and joy that such a triumph naturally afforded? The tragedy was announced for repetition, and was soon afterwards published, with a dedication full of gratitude and compliment to her whose "zealous exertion and great talents" had mainly contributed to its favourable reception.

The story of *Adelaide* is founded on an incident connected with the emigration of the noblesse during the French Revolution. Whether the tragic tale was derived from some narrative of suffering which the author had heard from the lips of some of the youthful exiles amongst whom his school-days had been passed, or whether there lingered in his mind vague memories of their misfortunes, from which his busy imagination wove the fable afterwards embodied in the play,—who now can tell? Few survive of the intimates to whom he was accustomed to impart his immature conceptions as they grew and formed themselves; for never was there one whose nature oftener impelled him to

"Snatch at his laurels while yet they were growing;"

or who was more consciously dependent upon sympathy for sustainment in his intellectual efforts. When, in after years, the subject of his first play was adverted to, he could rarely be induced to dwell upon it. The pride and pleasure of its early success were not forgotten, but his judgment of its defects had become inexorable, and his over sensitiveness exaggerated both their number and degree. The truth is, that while no one who cares for his fame can desire that his first composition shall be regarded as a fair test or specimen of his poetic powers, it cannot be denied that it contains many passages of touching beauty, and possesses, as a whole, no inconsiderable merit.

St. Evermont, a refugee of noble birth, accepts the hospitality of Count Lunenberg, a Viennese courtier, who woos and deceives Adelaide, the only daughter of the aged emigré. Her father's first misgivings are excited by her refusal to accept the hand of a distinguished noble; but he repels distrustful thoughts respecting his daughter, remembering that

> "Suspicion is the growth of meaner spirits;
> Yet does misfortune often cherish it,
> And then it lurks a rank and leafless weed
> Amid the ruins of a noble mind."

His grief and anger when he finds that he has lost the confidence, though not the affection, of his child,

is heightened by her unexplained absence from the cottage where Lunenberg had permitted them to dwell. He goes to seek her, while Julia, the betrothed of her brother, endeavours to soothe her mother's fears.

Julia.—She said that in the very deep of night,
Amid the abbey's ruined solitude,
The holy rite was done.
Madame St. Evermont.—Oh! do not speak,
Lest you disturb the quiet of the air;
And then—Hark! there—a step—it comes this way.
'Tis she. 'Twas nothing but the fitful breeze
That rustled through the multitude of leaves.
Julia.—Perhaps—
Madame St. Evermont.—Perhaps! It is a blessed sound,
And hope is fond of it. The sable slave
Stands on the beach of Western India's isles
In evening's breathing hour, and says "perhaps."
The captive in his darksome prison-house
Doth watch a ray of light upon the wall,
And gives an utterance to the holy word.
'Tis heard within Potosi's silver tombs,
Gasps in the fetid air of hospitals,
And in the naked huts of poverty.
Why is that comfort then denied to me?
Why then not say "perhaps?" Speak it again,
It is a drop of balm upon my heart.

An amusing anecdote relative to this period is told by one who afterwards became one of his most zealous fellow-workers in political life. Passing, one Sunday morning, through Abbey-street, this gentleman heard

his name called, in a low tone, by an acquaintance who resided in a house exactly opposite to that of Mr. Sheil. "Come," he said, laughing, "I will show you a strange sight." They entered the house, and from the drawing-room window perceived through the open casement of the same floor, on the other side of the way, what the prosaic householder assured his friend was a confirmed case of insanity. The young dramatist alternately sat at a small table, where he wrote with astonishing rapidity, and then starting up approached a full-length mirror, clasped his hands, and seemed to recite with passionate earnestness what he had been composing. "There he is, poor fellow," said his compassionate observer, "quite mad. The rest of the family are all gone to prayers, and he is making the most of his time while the house is still; for his father hates the notion of his writing plays, and worries him about it."

Whatever pride his father may have taken in the *éclat* attendant on his theatrical success, he had no disposition to tolerate the abstraction of his son's future thoughts from that profession towards the attainment of eminence in which all his parental dreams of ambition for years had tended. He had watched with pleasure the early predilections of the

boy for all kinds of fervid declamation. He had recounted fondly to his intimates the good report of his preceptors at Stoneyhurst of his progress in classical study, English composition, and rhetorical exercises. He had not concealed his exultation at the notoriety won by the precocious demagogue at Catholic meetings; and the praises bestowed on *Adelaide* were enhanced in his estimation by the recollection that they were due to an impatient energy on the part of his son to be enrolled a member of the bar. And were all the climbing hopes of professional profit and renown to be suddenly dashed by a wayward preference for the applause of playgoers, and the transient celebrity attendant upon dramatic verse? Declining health and fortune had not tended to improve a temper naturally irritable; and the frank and fearless avowals by his son, that he looked with more confidence to the success of his powers as a writer than a lawyer, oftentimes filled the old man's heart with bitterness and vexation. He was accustomed, during the sittings of the courts in term, to frequent the "Hall," at that time the centre of all gossip and news-telling in Dublin, and where he was sure to hear whatever might be said of his son. But the sounds of professional appreciation and promise for which he

so anxiously listened, came not, or came only at long intervals, and the disappointed father returned to his house, inwardly cursing plays and players as the incontestible cause of his son's slow progress at the bar. Feelings like these would frequently have way round the domestic hearth, where Richard was ever ready to defend himself from what were in reality unreasonable reproaches, by a thousand arguments full of wit and irony. In truth he was in few respects to blame. Whatever junior business came to him he did with exemplary diligence and punctuality. A professional friend, who is still living, remembers having sent him a brief, in some ordinary matter, which required his attendance at the sitting of the court. Accident brought the solicitor somewhat earlier than usual to the Hall, where he found no other occupants than the doorkeeper and the youthful advocate, who was pacing to and fro. The testimony of many others might be cited to the like effect. At no period of his professional life was he ever accused of neglecting business, or coming into court unprepared. But it was not his fate to win the preference, often unaccountable and capricious, of those who have it in their power to make the fortunes of young men of ability and attainments in the law. Examples might be multiplied

without number, of men whose youth and prime have passed away while waiting on the shore ere the tantalizing tide has reached them, and whom, nevertheless, it has at length raised rapidly and borne securely into golden havens. Those in whose moral constitution there has happily been infused sufficient insensibility or phlegm, wait on without shivering or sinking; and they have their reward. Of the broken hearts that perish in the protracted struggle for honourable existence the world takes no heed; and as for the most part they disappear silently, no curious inquisition is made into the cause. There are a few to whom a different destiny from either appertains: who have neither the unfeeling fortitude of the one, nor the faint-hearted susceptibilities of the other: who are neither insensible to the ill usage of fortune, nor crushed by her buffetings: who fight with fate, and try if haply they may cajole her into relenting; and who, in the restless round of varied expedients and attempts, necessarily incur more exposure, pain, and humiliation than their pride will ever suffer them to tell, or the insolence of the world would believe were it told. Something of the terrible experience in question was at a later period depicted by Sheil in some of the essays which he published anonymously,

and to which allusion will hereafter more particularly be made: and other evidences are still in existence of the bitter mortifications which are the lot of every man who, without the possession of a competency, attempts to tread an ambitious path in life; and who, unable to stifle within himself the inspirations of a divine nature, is perpetually beset and baffled by the meanest exigencies of existence. Ought all these to be set forth in detail to gratify the curiosity of the crowd? Assuredly, no. To the many, who after all are, happily for themselves, secure from such trials and temptations, and who happily also for themselves are out of all true and practical sympathy with those who undergo the struggle,—such details are, perhaps, more likely to convey misleading than correct impressions; and to the comparatively few who have been schooled by fellow-suffering in fellow-feeling, such details are seldom acceptable when uttered in the public way. If it be true of all men, surely it is more especially true of men of genius, that "the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger comprehendeth it not."

In the course of this year he was an occasional guest at the Priory, the country residence of Mr. Curran, then Master of the Rolls. Few survive who

can recal the delightful evenings that a limited circle were permitted to enjoy at the table of that remarkable man. Of his eloquence in public many memorials remain; but of the exuberant flow of his wit and imagination in social converse, no adequate records have been preserved. He loved to see around him younger men of genius, in whose generous political aspirations, in the intervals of the deepening gloom that overshadowed his latter days, he keenly sympathised. His irrepressible love of humour was sometimes, indeed, indulged at their expense, when some extravagance of phrase or premature air of dignity fairly provoked a laugh; but no one ever more cordially recognised the promise of undeveloped ability, or cheered more readily by his praise, the early efforts of his friends. Instances of both are narrated, respecting Sheil, who was at the time more given to an ambitious tone of conversation than others of his standing, and whose consciousness of the defects in his personal appearance was apt to betray itself upon trivial occasions. The latter peculiarity soon caught the eye of Curran. It is possible that he set it down to morbid vanity, but in any case he was sure to give it no quarter. "One day at dinner," says Mr. Charles Phillips, "somebody made a passing remark which

appeared to make the colour rise to the cheek of our young author, who affected gravely to repudiate the imputation. With tragic emphasis, Mr. Curran exclaimed—'I did not think that aught could bring a blush into that *casearius* countenance.'" Sheil was much annoyed at this joke, and did not recover his good humour during the evening. But when, on another occasion, some one whose colder temperament led him to speak disparagingly of Sheil's intellectual resources as compared with his affluence of diction, Curran warmly replied: "No, no; you underrate greatly the ideas of which his mind is full, and which are not the less valuable and varied because the curtains hang in splendid drapery."

Somewhat later he became acquainted with Mr. Grattan, on whom he looked with feelings of mingled wonder and veneration, and in whose political footsteps he continued to walk until death terminated the aged patriot's career. His recollections of the pleasure and profit derived from intercourse with these two gifted men, remained to the latest period of his life fresh and unfading. Comparing them, some years afterwards, with other eminent persons whom he had known, he thus writes: "Curran was certainly the most eloquent man whose conversation I ever had an

opportunity of enjoying. But his serious reflections bore the character of harangue, and his wit, with all its brilliancy, verged a little upon farce. He was so fond, indeed, of introducing dialogue into his stories, that at times his conversation assumed the aspect of a dramatic exhibition. The conversation of Mr. Grattan was not of an after-dinner cast. You should have walked with him through the woods of Tinnehinch, and listened to his recollections of a better day, by the sound of the lulling and romantic waters of those enchanting groves, in which, it is said, he studied the arts of elocution in his youth, and through which he delighted to wander in the illuminated sunset of his glorious age. It was necessary that his faculties should be thrown into a swing before they could come into full play. He poured out fine sentiments and glittering epigrams. It was in sketches of character that he excelled; but you should give him time and leisure for the completion of his miniatures."

Little inducement existed to take part at this time in Irish politics. The schism regarding the Veto still continued. The authorities at Rome, to whom ecclesiastical powers had been intrusted by the Pope during his captivity in France, did not, when appealed to, confirm the views taken by the Anti-Vetoists.

The publication of a letter, addressed 16th February, 1814, by Monsignore (afterwards Cardinal) Quarantotti to Dr. Poynter, excited afresh the vehemence of controversial passions. "Having taken the advice of the most learned prelates and divines," said the writer of this memorable letter,—"having examined the letters which had been transmitted to him, both by Dr. Poynter and the Archbishop of Dublin (Dr. Troy), and the matter having been maturely discussed in a special congregation, it was decreed, that the Catholics might with satisfaction and gratitude accept and embrace the Bill which was last year presented for their emancipation." A hope was expressed that, having been lost by a small majority in the previous session, the Bill would be introduced anew; it was declared that "it was highly proper that their prelates should be agreeable and acceptable to the king; that they should exercise their ministry with his full consent;" and finally, it was "allowed that those who were designed for a bishopric or deanery, and were proposed by the clergy, might be admitted or rejected by the king, according to the proposed Bill."* By the Anti-Vetoists, the decision thus pronounced was not regarded as ecclesiastically binding; and on the libe-

* Butler. Vol. iv.; Appendix, p. 518.

ration of Pius VII. expectations were entertained that it would be reversed. Both clergy and laity addressed the Pontiff on the subject; but his answers did not contain the condemnation looked for.

In a letter from Cardinal Litta to Dr. Poynter, dated 26th April, 1815, the Pope was described as "feeling no hesitation," in case the Bill requiring securities should pass, "in allowing those to whom it appertained to present to the King's Ministers a list of candidates, in order that if any of them should be obnoxious, or suspected, the Government might immediately point him out, so as that he might be expunged,"* &c. &c.

The terms here used were fully adopted and confirmed by the Pontiff in a letter to the Irish bishops, February 1, 1815.

"For the prevention, therefore, of those evils which were to be apprehended on the part of so powerful a Government, no other means appeared to us sufficient, but that of agreeing to those rules relative to the election of bishops, which are mentioned in the letter of Cardinal Litta. Now with regard to the powers which we have expressed an intention of granting, we consider it, not only as making part of a fit and

* Butler. Vol. iv.; Appendix, p. 534.

wise arrangement of ecclesiastical affairs, which shall be at once not injurious to religion, and a means of averting from it many calamities otherwise to be feared, but also as a likely motive towards the attainment of emancipation."*

The conditions are fully recapitulated under which it had been agreed to acknowledge a Veto in the Crown, and those to whom the letter was addressed were exhorted to acquiescence therein.

But the Government of the day paid little regard to concessions so offered; and all who in Ireland adopted their tone and spirit, became the objects of popular suspicion and dislike.

On their side, the Vetoists too sanguinely believed that by combinations in Parliament and negotiations with Rome, the question of religious disabilities might be ere long adjusted; and the notion seems to have been industriously circulated that agitation was more likely to prove a hindrance than a help to the end desired. To what extent this feeling may have contributed to the long cessation of any combined effort for the removal of religious disabilities during the period which followed, it is difficult perhaps to say. Certain it is that the angry altercations about the

* Butler. Vol. iv.; Appendix, p. 544.

Veto tended to sow doubts and divisions in the minds of every class of the community. Popular incredulity quickly begot popular apathy; and the most hopeful, by temperament, were at length forced to confess that civil equality looked as though it were further off than ever.

Disgusted with the condition of things, in which he saw no likelihood of a speedy change, the mind of Mr. Sheil soon became engrossed with other thoughts and feelings. His habit of soliloquizing upon subjects that most deeply interested him, regardless of time or place, often rendered him a source of comment, and sometimes of amusement to strangers as well as friends. A story of this kind is told, for which there probably is some foundation, and at which, when rallied on the subject by one who knew him intimately, he laughed heartily himself. A short time after he became acquainted with Miss O'Halloran, he was much struck by the beauty of her person and many accomplishments. But he seems nevertheless to have doubted for a time whether his admiration was sufficiently warmed into affection to justify him in offering his hand. With conscientious care he set about examining his own emotions, and with habitual

candour answered every question which a metaphysical imagination could suggest. While engaged in this process of self-introspection he was overheard by his friend in one of the passages of the Four Courts anxiously interrogating himself: "Well, truly, admiration is akin to love, but is the kindred close enough with me? I think it is: but let me see;—if she were now to die, would it mar my future happiness? I am sure it would;—yes, I am in love, there's no denying it." Soon afterwards he made his proposals to the lady, which were accepted. She was the daughter of a merchant of respectability in Dublin, who had died not long before, leaving but a slender provision for his family. Mrs. O'Halloran was the sister of Colonel MacMahon, private secretary to the Prince Regent, through whose influence the Mastership of the Rolls had recently been conferred upon his brother. Whatever anticipations may have been formed as to the advantages of this connexion, it is certain that none, even of a professional kind, were derived from it by Mr. Sheil. When spoken to on the subject by others, Sir William MacMahon always excused himself, intimating pompously that "a sense of public duty rendered it impossible for him to identify himself with a person holding and expressing

such violent opinions." When it was suggested to him, two or three years later, that he might easily obtain a commissionership of bankruptcy for the husband of his niece, who there was reason to suppose if it were offered would accept it, although the emoluments were inconsiderable, he declined to interfere. No greater service could probably have been rendered to him whom it was intended to slight, than this refusal. The office was one calculated to lead to nothing in the way of professional advancement, while it was one that must have tended to withdraw the individual who held it from any active participation in political life. But the neglect and indifference of the Master of the Rolls was not the less felt by the still briefless barrister, because some dim consciousness perhaps of a higher destiny, and a natural elasticity of temperament, rendered him more inclined to laugh at the solemn affectations of his judicial relative than seriously to resent his demeanour towards him. "The only thing which provokes me," he would say, "is that people should fancy I have never got anything out of him; it is quite untrue, he once asked me to breakfast."

Adelaide was performed on the 23rd of May, 1816, at Covent Garden. Mr. Young, Mr. C. Kemble, Miss O'Neil, and Miss Foote, sustaining the prin-

cipal parts. Owing to some accidental circumstance, the house was thinly attended, and though many scenes excited applause, the performance, as a whole, went off flatly, and it does not appear to have been repeated.

During the winter of 1816, his thoughts were full of a second dramatic effort. The incidents he selected for the groundwork of the plot, were taken from the tragic story of the oppression suffered by the Moors in Spain, previous to their final extirpation. Persecution for political purposes, in the desecrated name of religion, had about this time been revived in the Peninsula, under Ferdinand VII., and the eager spirit which chafed daily at Catholic disfranchisement in his own land, gladly sought occasion to depict in unsuspected verse, the hatefulness of intolerance, as exhibited by a despot professing the Catholic creed. The interest of the play turns upon the love of Hemeya, the titular prince of the Moors of Granada, for the daughter of a Christian noble, who rejects his suit, as being that of an Infidel. Pescara, the tyrannical governor of the province, is, moreover, a rival, and to secure the unwilling hand of Florinda, produces a decree of Philip II., interdicting the marriage of a Mahomedan with a Christian. After a long struggle

between his faith and his affection, Hemeya declares himself ready to conform. A revolt, of which it was intended he should be the head, is disconcerted by the discovery of his apostacy. Filled with remorse by the reproaches of the veteran counsellor of his youth, he endeavours to persuade Malec to fly, and subsequently joins in the attempt to rescue him when condemned to death by the Inquisition. The faithful Moor escapes, while Hemeya is made prisoner, and Florinda is compelled to wed Pescara, as the only means of saving her lover's life, but dies by poison, that she may not violate her early vow. Hemeya, having slain his cruel rival, falls by his own hand.

In the spring of 1817, there were rumours at Covent Garden, of an expected tragedy by the author of *Adelaide*. The reputation of the young poet extended beyond the walls of the theatre, from the part he had already taken at public meetings in Ireland. Miss O'Neil expressed great interest in him, and augured well of future success. He came to town, accompanied by his young and accomplished wife, to whom he had been recently married, and an early day in April was named for the reading of the play. "When he began to read *The Apostate* in the green-room, there was a disposition," says Mr. Macready,

"to smile at his very peculiar voice and manner, but its earnestness soon riveted attention, and the reading terminated to the satisfaction of all but myself, who had to undertake the disagreeable character of Pescara. I had met him the day before at Wallace's* chambers, and it was impossible to be in his company and not to like him. Our acquaintance soon ripened into friendship, which was never relaxed during his life."†

After due preparation *The Apostate* was produced on the 3rd May, 1817, Mr. Young, Mr. C. Kemble, Mr. Macready, and Miss O'Neil sustaining the principal parts. The anxiety with which an author witnesses the first representation of his play has passed into a proverb, and there never was any one, perhaps, who by natural temperament was doomed to suffer more intensely from the oscillations of hope and fear incident to such an occasion, than our youthful dramatist. With painful solicitude he watched the performance during the first and second acts. All went well, however. There was some applause, no murmurs, and at length, sick of his own misgivings, and conscious perhaps that he betrayed a certain want

* Wallace, the continuator of Sir J. Mackintosh's History of England. Lardner's Cyclopædia.

† Letter of Mr. Macready, January 28th, 1854.

of dignity in the irrepressible excitement of his look and manner, he betook himself to the green-room when the third act began, resolved to remain there during the remainder of the play. Few of its usual occupants were lingering there; and one of the attendants soon observed the restless author pacing with measured steps the *estrade*, or narrow platform, which was placed all round the room, and on which a continuous row of seats was specially devoted to the performers. For a time he seemed wholly unconscious that any one was present; he then suddenly stopped, and in a low tone exclaimed, "Can you tell me, sir, about what time they generally begin to hiss tragedies at this house?"

The success, however, was in every respect complete. It ran through Miss O'Neil's remaining nights of the season, and was resumed during the next. The character of Florinda was eminently suited to this distinguished actress, and seemed as if it had been specially written for her. Contrary to his anticipations, the part of Pescara, as sustained by Mr. Macready, afforded him ample opportunity for the development of powers which previously had hardly won their due meed of appreciation. All who remember this remarkable performance concur in opinion

regarding it. Amongst them was one whose critical discrimination and impartiality are alike beyond question. Ludwig Tieck, the German commentator on Shakespeare, describes himself as having been peculiarly attracted by the performance of a villain in one of Mr. Sheil's tragedies. "This villain," he says, "was admirably represented, and was indeed so vehement, truthful, and powerful a personation that, for the first time since he had been in England, he felt himself recalled to the best days of German acting. If the young man continued in this style, he would go far." This opinion he repeated in 1839. It was by Mr. Young, who personated the character of Malec, that the lines were uttered regarding the Inquisition, which drew forth at the time the liveliest expressions of applause.

The following is the passage thus alluded to:—

Hemeya.—Are we not bound to each? The lordling Spaniard
Treads on our heads. We groan beneath the yoke
That, shaken, gores more deeply!—
Resistance will but ope new founts of blood,
To gush in foaming torrents.—Dost thou forget
The Spaniard lifts the sword, and almost wishes
That we should give pretence to tyranny?
Look at yon gloomy towers; e'en now we stand
Within the shadows of the Inquisition.
Malec.—Art thou afraid? Look at yon gloomy towers!—
Has thy fair minion told thee to beware

Of damps and rheums caught in the dungeon's vapours?
Or has she said those dainty limbs of thine
Were only made for love? Look at your towers!—
Ay! I will look upon them, not to fear,
But deeply curse them. There ye stand aloft,
Frowning in all your black and dreary pride,
Monastic monuments of human misery,—
Houses of torment,—palaces of horror!
Oft have you echoed to the lengthened shriek
Of midnight murder; often have you heard
The deep choaked groan of stifled agony
Burst in its dying whisper. Curses on ye!
Curse on the tyrant that sustains you, too!
Oh, may ye one day from your tow'ring height,
Fall on the wretches that uphold your domes,
And crush them in your ruins! Oh, Hemeya!
Look there, Hemeya! think how many Moors,
How many of our wretched countrymen
Are doom'd to perish there, unless——
Hemeya.—By Heavens!
Thy burning front, thy flaming eyes proclaim it—
Some glorious thought is lab'ring—speak—what mean'st thou?
I feel thy spirit's mastery—my soul
Fires in the glowing contact.—Malec, speak
Tell me, what can we do?
Malec.—What men can do
Who groan beneath the lash of tyranny
And feel the strength of madness. Have we not scimitars?
'Twas not in vain I sought those rugged heights,
Nor vainly do I now again return—
Amid the Alpuxerra's cragged cliffs,
Are there not myriads of high-hearted Moors,
That only need a leader to be free?
Thy voice would be a trumpet in the mountains,
That from their snow-crown'd tops and hollow vales

Would echo back the blast of liberty,—
Dost thou not understand me?
Hemeya.—Speak!—Can I free my people? Can I rend
Our shameful bonds asunder, and revenge?
Malec.—Can'st thou?——
Hemeya.—Do not command me not to love;
But, if there be a road to liberty,
Provided Death, with his uplifted dart,
Stand at its entrance——Speak—is there a way?
Malec.—And, were there not a way,
We'd hew one in the rock!—There is a way——
Hemeya.—My soul hangs in thy lips—
Malec.—I fear thee still—
I fear thy wav'ring nature.
Hemeya.—No, you wrong me!—
By Heav'n you wrong me!—
Malec.—Fall upon the earth,
And by thy father's sacred memory—
By all thy people's wrongs—by Allah's name—
Swear——

He was desirous of disposing of the copyright of his play, but was at first somewhat at a loss to whom he should offer it. The publishing world was to him a region still unknown. All he could do was to ask the names of the chief bibliopoles of the day, and take his chance of coming to terms with some of them. One day, when passing along Piccadilly, the name of Hatchard caught his eye. "A first-rate house, I'm told," he muttered to himself, as he stopped at the door, and made up his mind to enter. He was

shown into the private room, and in a few minutes found himself in the presence of the well-known publisher of orthodox divinity. "I have a work," he said, "which I wish to know if you will purchase."

"Serious, I presume, sir?" was the circumspect reply.

"Yes, decidedly; rather too much so, perhaps; but still one whose popularity I think you will admit may be anticipated, inasmuch as it has already made some noise—it is a tragedy."

Something between a shiver and a smile passed over the features of Mr. Hatchard as he gravely uttered the decisive words—"We, sir, print nothing but sermons."

"Oh, then, I need not waste your time or my own; for I, sir, write nothing but plays."

A critic in the *Quarterly Review*, while declaring his belief that the days of dramatic excellence had passed away, and that, with the exception of three or four plays which he enumerates, nothing had been produced since the days of Shakespeare worthy of remembrance, acknowledges the great success which *The Apostate* had met with in representation. Much of this he ascribes to the manner in which it had been produced, and to the skilful adaptation of character to the

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varied powers of the chief performers. He candidly admits, however, that "this tragedy possesses the merit of preserving unremitted interest in the progress of the narrative, from the first act to the last; the dramatic excitement never ceases or languishes; it is supported by a rapid succession of events, which, though destitute of intrinsic novelty, are very varied; and by a catastrophe, which, though common-place, is certainly unexpected:—this is a great and necessary art in dramatic composition; without it, poetry fatigues and passion exhausts us; but still, it is rather an art than a talent; it savours more of the experience of the mechanist than of the inspiration of the poet. But let us estimate it as we may, its use on the stage is as indispensable as its effect is resistless; and that which produces a powerful effect must be allowed to possess some share of merit." He likewise owns that "The versification does not resemble that of any other author; and in this age of *schools*, not to be a plagiarist is to be not wholly without praise."* The writer compensates himself for these admissions by caricaturing the scenic accidents of the piece, by complaining that the language does not adequately sustain the "strength of the situation," and by objecting that

* *Quarterly Review*, for April, 1817, No. xxxiii., p. 259.

the Inquisition is denounced by the unhappy Moors who were its victims, and who, he conceives, had no right whatever to complain of the cold-blooded persecution of Philip II., because men of the same creed elsewhere had been fanatical conquerors some centuries before. As a matter of historic criticism this objection is singularly infelicitous. Whatever their other faults may have been, or those of their kindred and creed elsewhere, the Mahomedans of Spain are allowed, even, by the annalists of their exterminators, to have been eminently tolerant and humane. The Christians, in all matters exclusively relating to themselves, were governed by their own laws administered by their own judges, their churches and monasteries were scattered over the principal towns, Cordova retaining seven, Toledo six, &c.; and their clergy were allowed to display the costume and celebrate the pompous ceremonial of their communion.* Such of the Christians as chose were permitted to remain in the conquered territory in undisturbed possession of their property. They were allowed to worship in their own way, to be governed by their own laws, to fill certain civil offices, and serve in the army;† Christian students were per-

* Prescott's Hist. Ferdinand and Isabella, Introd.; § 1, note.

† Prescott's Hist., Part 1st, chap. 8.

mitted to frequent the Moslem Universities of Andalusia; and among those who came from far to partake of an educational hospitality too seldom imitated in Christendom, were men who, like the exemplary Gerbert, subsequently rose to the highest eminence in the Church, and who contributed to found new seats of learning in their own lands.

Besides the gratification derived from its success, the publication and performance of *The Apostate* were productive of other advantages, not less acceptable. The copyright was purchased by Mr. Murray for 300*l.*, and in his hands it passed through several editions. In addition to this, the author is said to have received 400*l.* from the managers of the theatre.

CHAPTER IV.

1818—1820.

Attack on Mr. Grattan by the mob—Interposition of Mr. Sheil—Play of *Bellamira*—Rehearsal—Miss O'Neil: Mr. Gifford—Shirley's *Traitor*—*Evadne*—Visit to Paris: Talma—Dramatic writings—*Montoni*—*Damon and Pythias.*

At the general election of 1818, Mr. Grattan and Mr. Shaw were returned for the city of Dublin without opposition. The proceedings at the hustings passed off quietly, and Mr. Grattan's friends had arranged that, as was customary, he should be chaired. His appearance on the steps of the court-house was the signal for vociferation and insults from the mob, with whom he had recently become unpopular. The cavalcade had not proceeded very far when symptoms of violence began to be manifested: stones from various quarters were thrown at the chair; and at length Mr. Grattan was compelled to seek for safety in a house in Capel-

street, the door of which was soon beset by his senseless and infuriated pursuers. The decorated car was in a few moments torn to pieces; the windows of the house in which the venerable patriot had sought a shelter were quickly broken; and in the absence of any police force sufficient to disperse the rioters, serious alarm was felt lest an attempt should be made to break in the door. At this critical moment Mr. Sheil, having quitted the court-house, where he had been present at the nomination, reached the street which had become the scene of this disgraceful outrage, and hearing that Mr. Grattan was supposed to be in danger, he entered the first door which he found open, and, hastening to a balcony, commenced an earnest and eloquent appeal to the populace on topics not immediately connected with the subject of their irritation. Caught by the sound of his shrill, though then unfamiliar voice, and the passionate gestures with which his impromptu harangue was accompanied, the curiosity of the multitude rapidly passed into admiration; and finding his object gained, the young orator continued to amuse and flatter his fickle audience until time had been given for the rescue of the aged and insulted statesman.

Encouraged by the success of his dramatic efforts, he

had devoted a considerable portion of his too abundant leisure, in 1817, to the composition of a tragedy called *Bellamira; or, the Fall of Tunis.* The story is founded on an incident in the life of Charles V., who, provoked by the incessant piracies of the Moors, led a considerable army into Africa, to liberate the many Christians held in captivity, and to avenge the cruelties to which southern Christendom had long been exposed. The incidents mainly consist of the unexpected recognition, by a father, of his daughter, who on the same day finds in a fellow prisoner the husband whom she had long mourned as dead. An early rival of the latter, banished from Venice for his crimes, and become a renegade to faith as well as country, is in command of the garrison of Tunis, and seeks to avenge his early wrongs against the husband by the dishonour of the wife, whom he now treats as his slave. A revolt of the Christians, on hearing the tidings that an army of deliverance is at hand, intercepts the oppressor in his purpose, and he falls by the dying hand of the father, whom he had wounded when unarmed. The unities, regarding which the old controversy had about this time been revived, are strictly observed throughout the piece. The characters are classically few, and the emotions by which

they are animated are of that touching simplicity and depth that is best fitted to enlist the sympathies of the many in the tale of tragic woe. There are several passages of much force and beauty; and, for the most part, the interest of the dialogue is well sustained. But an impartial judgment could not deny that many of the faults found by the critics of the day mar (especially in reading) the pleasure which the composition is otherwise calculated to produce.

Sanguine and enthusiastic, however, our author laid his new performance before Miss O'Neil, and successfully solicited her all-powerful aid in bringing it before the public. He was likewise fortunate enough to find that at Covent Garden Mr. Young, Mr. Charles Kemble, and Mr. Macready were willing to undertake the principal parts; and it was finally arranged that the play should be produced early in the ensuing season. Mr. Sheil himself constantly attended the rehearsals; and one of the distinguished actors already named used to recount a laughable blunder made on one of these occasions. At the end of the fourth act, Montalto, when seeking to rescue his daughter from the grasp of Amurath, instinctively feels for the handle of his sword, forgetting that in the previous scene he had given it to his brother.



The intention of this gesture not being understood, some embarrassment arose at the rehearsal as to the tone and action with which the line—

"My scimitar, my scimitar,—my child!"

ought to be given. The author eagerly interposed, and in his ardent method of instructing the actors, he put himself in the place of Young, to show him how he wished the conduct of the scene to be managed: "Now observe,—here's Mr. Young, here's Mr. Kemble. Well, the guard comes on—Mr. Young draws his sword, and finds he has not got it."

A somewhat caustic, though far from unfriendly notice of *Bellamira*, from the pen of Mr. Leigh Hunt, appeared soon after its first performance, in the *Examiner*. "The tendency to declamation," and to "mistake vehemence for strength, the impatience of lowness for the attainment of height, and excessive tragic effect physically overpowering for real effect at once carrying away and sustaining,"—are justly reproved. But these comments are intermingled with a cordial appreciation of the scenic merits of the piece, and the fervid expression of sentiments pure and exalted, in language chastened by good taste and unaffected feeling. The faults are ascribed to a "young ambition,

ardent for its purpose, without the experience requisite to obtain it." But the evidences of future promise are freely acknowledged, and Mr. Sheil is described as one obviously possessing "sense and spirit enough to pursue the hints" thus given, by "cultivating his reading, and still more by his observation of human nature."* These stimulating admonitions, as we shall hereafter see, were not thrown away.

Bellamira was well received at first, and appears to have been repeated frequently during the season of 1818. A sum of 300*l.* was received by the author from the theatre; and Mr. Murray became the purchaser of the copyright for 100*l.* Miss O'Neil, however, was not satisfied with the effect of the character she had to sustain, and intimated to Mr. Harris, at that time lessee of the theatre, her indisposition to its performance being continued.

It was at Mr. Murray's that Mr. Sheil became acquainted with Mr. Gifford, who was then preparing an edition of the works of Shirley for publication. Gifford spoke of one of the plays as almost fit for representation, and asked Mr. Sheil to call upon him, that he might give him a printed copy: he did so

* *Examiner*, April 26, 1818.

next day, and received from him the proof sheets of the *Traitor*, with which he was greatly delighted; he at once applied himself to the task of its adaptation, and exulted in being able to find a new character in Lorenzo for his friend Macready. He made considerable alterations, and, omitting altogether the most important scene of the old drama, substituted for it one wholly different in conception and language. Old Mr. Harris, to whom it was then submitted, returned it with the remark that an altered play never had the same interest and attraction as a new one, and that the person who could write such a scene as that in the third act, (the statue scene afterwards embodied in *Evadne*) ought to write the entire play himself.* This suggestion was not unfruitful. His mind continued to dwell upon the subject, and some months after he had completed what was destined to prove the most lastingly popular of his compositions.

On the 10th of February 1819, was produced *Evadne*, which, both as regards poetic merit and originality of dramatic effect, has generally been considered the most successful effort of our author. The accomplished

* Letter from Mr. Macready, 20th January, 1854.

critic whose strictures and suggestions regarding the preceding play have been already noticed, was prompt to recognise the superior power of delineation and purity of style manifested in *Evadne*. "This play has very interesting passages of character, plot, and dialogue. The character of Evadne, who is so devoted to her lover that she cannot bear the idea of his being miserable or hurt, even though he has forsaken her —who smiles and dries up her tears, and then appeals to the staring gladness of her poor eyes to persuade her brother that he has not injured her— and who goes to her lover's supposed wife to get her to use her usurped influence in order to prevent a duel—this truly feminine and noble character is a delightful relief from the selfish and extravagantly virtuous wives who have been palmed upon us of late for women. The scene amidst the statues of her ancestors, where she puts herself, as it were, under the protection of the marble image of her father, who had instructed the king and saved his life, and then asks him whether he can take her away, is very fine; if it does not come from Shirley, who is said to be Mr. Sheil's original, it does great honour to that gentleman's invention, and is the best and perhaps the only novelty of incident in living tragedy. We have not

Shirley's play of the *Traitor* by us, of which Mr. Sheil is said to have made use; but either he has made great use of it indeed, or agreeably to the advice we gave him on a former occasion, he has set himself to think, as well as to produce effect, and has thought to some purpose; he has felt his own way through the dialogue, and had a sense of things, as opposed to words. We always thought he had a nice, delicate, and ingenuous nature; and if this dialogue is his own, his powers of intellect are on a par with it."*

In the Preface to *Evadne*, as originally published,† it is stated that a portion of the fable on which Shirley's *Traitor* is founded had been employed in the construction of the plot; and from this, doubtless, arose the groundless impression that some of the finer passages, as well as a part of the general conception of character and grouping, were derived from the old and forgotten play. But no one who is at the pains to compare the two tragedies will find any further resemblance between them than that which the author himself indicates. In both, the lawless passion of an Italian despot for the sister of one of his nobles is

* Mr. Leigh Hunt: *Examiner*, Feb. 14th, 1819.

† Murray, 1819.

encouraged by the traitorous counsels of his chief minister, who hopes thereby to compass his dethronement and death, but who, in his guilty purpose is baffled by the constancy and resolution of the heroine, who, to save the prince from her brother's vengeance, meets him alone, and shames him back to virtue.

But beyond these incidents, little, if any, resemblance is perceptible. The character of Amidea is one of the least interesting or striking which the vigorous pen of Shirley has portrayed; and her resort, in her defence, is to a concealed dagger, with which she wounds herself, exclaiming—

> Let this deserve your faith—I dare be just—
> This crimson river issuing from my arm.
> *Duke.*—Hold!
> *Amidea.*—Never; it shall flow; and if this channel
> Yield not enough, I'll strike another vein,
> And after that another, and not pity
> The murmuring stream till, through a prodigal wound,
> I have drain'd the fountain: this doth weep for you,
> And shall extol my death, if it may teach
> You to correct your blood.*

The interest of the story in Shirley's play is not a little spoiled by a sort of second plot, serving apparently no other purpose than to make away with nearly all the lives that have been saved in the

* *The Traitor*, Act iii., scene 3.

previous one. Amidea having escaped suicide, falls by the mistaken hand of her brother, in a moment of unjust suspicion, while the tyrant is slain by his perfidious minister, whom fate overtakes in the same scene. Passages of great power and beauty are sullied by coarseness, not of expression only, but of idea; and there is throughout a want of concentration and simplicity, calculated to mar the effect of the whole.

Nothing can be more unlike in almost every feature than the chaste and simple drama of Mr. Sheil. Feminine tenderness and generosity are combined with noble courage in the conception of the principal character. The lover, beguiled into the unjust belief of her inconstancy during his absence, ere he renounces her, thus mourns over the beauty that had so long enchained him :—

Let me peruse the face where loveliness
Stays, like the light after the sun is set.
Sphered in the stillness of those heaven-blue eyes,
The soul sits beautiful; the high white front,
Smooth as the brow of Pallas, seems a temple
Sacred to holy thinking! and those lips
Wear the sweet smile of sleeping infancy,
They are so innocent.—Ah! thou art still
The same soft creature, in whose lovely form
Virtue and beauty seemed as if they tried
Which should exceed the other,—thou hast got
That brightness all around thee, that appeared

An emanation of the soul, that loved
To adorn its habitation with itself,
And in thy body was like light that looks
More beautiful in the reflecting cloud
It lives in, in the evening. Oh! Evadne,
Thou art not altered—would thou wert!

Vicentio is about to wed another. Evadne thus forgives and blesses him:

May you be happy with that happier maid
That never could have loved you more than I do,
But may deserve you better! May your days,
Like a long stormless summer, glide away,
And peace and trust be with you!—May you be
The after patterns of felicity,
That lovers, when they wed, may only wish
To be as blest as you were—loveliness
Dwell round about you like an atmosphere
Of our soft southern air, where every flower
In Hymen's yellow wreath may bloom and blow!
* * * * * * *
And when at last you close your gentle lives,
Blameless as they were blessed, may you fall
Into the grave as softly as the leaves
Of two sweet roses on an autumn eve,
Beneath the soft sighs of the western wind,
Drop to the earth together! For myself—
I will but pray—I will but pray my lord.
Vicentio.—I must be gone, else she may soon regain
A mastery o'er my nature.
Evadne.—Oh! Vicentio,
I see that I am doomed a trouble to you.
I shall not long be so. I soon shall cease
To be of care to you, or to myself,

Or to aught else in this gay glittering world:
There's but one trouble I shall ever give
To any one again. I will but pray
The Maker of the lonely beds of peace
To open one of his deep hollow ones
Where misery goes to sleep, and let me in;—
If e'er you chance to pass beside my grave,
I am sure you'll not refuse a little sigh,
And if my friend (I still will call her so)
My friend, Olivia, chide you, prithee tell her
Not to be jealous of me in my grave.

In the closing scene, when pursued by the unworthy solicitations of the King, Evadne relies on the potency of her eloquence alone. And there are few finer conceptions in our dramatic literature than that in which she appeals for protection to the statues of her ancestors; and, pointing to her father's marble effigy, asks:

Know you this statue?
King.—No, in sooth, I do not.
Evadne.—Nay, look again—for I shall think but ill
Of princely memories, if you can find,
Within the inmost chambers of your heart,
No image like to this—look at that smile—
That smile, my liege—look at it!
King.—It is your father!
Evadne.—(*Breaking into exultation*)
Aye!—'tis indeed my father!—'tis my good,
Exalted, generous, and god-like father!
Whose memory, though he had left his child
A naked, houseless roamer through the world,
Were an inheritance a princess might

Be proud of for her dower!—It is my father!
Whose like in honour, virtue, and the fine
Integrity that constitutes a man,
He hath not left behind!—There is that smile
That, like perpetual daylight, shone about him
In clear and bright magnificence of soul!
Who was my father?
[*With a proud and conscious interrogatory.*]
King.—One, whom I confess
Of high and many virtues.
Evadne.—Is that all?
I will help your memory, and tell you first,
That the late King of Naples looked among
The noblest in his realm for that good man,
To whom he might entrust your opening youth,
And found him worthiest. In the eagle's nest
Early he placed you, and beside his wing
You learned to mount to glory! Underneath
His precious care you grew, and you were once
Thought grateful for his service. His whole life
Was given to your uses, and his death—
Ha! do you start, my lord! On Milan's plain
He fought beside you, and when he beheld
A sword thrust at your bosom, rushed—it pierced him!
He fell down at your feet,—he did, my lord!
He perished to preserve you! [*rushes to the statue*]
Breathless image,
Although no heart doth beat within that breast,
No blood is in those veins, let me enclasp thee,
And feel thee at my bosom. Now, sir, I am ready—
Come and unloose these feeble arms, and take me!—
Aye, take me from this neck of senseless stone,
And to reward the father with the meet
And wonted recompense that princes give—
Make me as foul as blotted pestilence,

As black as darkest midnight, and as vile
As guilt and shame can make me.
  King.—She has smitten
Compunction thro' my soul!
  Evadne.—Approach, my lord!
Come in the midst of all mine ancestry,
Come and unloose me from my father's arms—
Come, if you dare, and in his daughter's shame
Reward him for the last drops of the blood
Shed for his prince's life!—Come!
  King.—Thou hast wrought
A miracle upon thy prince's heart,
And lifted up a vestal lamp to show,
To show my soul its own deformity—my guilt!

The copyright was purchased by Mr. Murray for the sum of a hundred guineas, and the play went through many editions. From the theatre the author received four hundred pounds. As an acting play it has kept its place longer than any of the others. Of late years the principal part has frequently been sustained with great effect by Miss Helen Faucit: and the lovers of the modern drama in the United States have recently become familiar with *Evadne* as performed by Miss Julia Dean.

In September, 1819, he visited Paris, where for the first time he became acquainted with Talma. He found the great actor affable and frank, easy of access, and apparently pleased with the opportunity

of talking to one who was well acquainted with English dramatic literature and with the existing English stage. Talma understood the language of Shakspeare well, and had long cherished the idea that he would succeed in the representation in English of the leading characters which he had himself seen Kemble play. He spoke of Kemble's performances in a tone of the highest admiration, but doubted whether his voice would have been strong enough for the requirements of the French stage. He had studied *Hamlet*, in particular, and one day, at Sheil's request, recited for him, as he conceived it ought to be delivered in representation, the celebrated soliloquy, "To be or not to be," &c. There was much originality and impressiveness about it; it would not perhaps have altogether satisfied a London audience, "but a discriminating actor would have found in it much for study, and even for imitation. It was at once solemn and abrupt. The pauses were long, but the utterance was sudden, and occasionally precipitate. There was an earnestness, and, if I may so say, an impatient curiosity in his investigations of the mysteries of the grave, which he seemed to open and search like one looking for its secrets like a treasure in its dark and impenetrable depth. Yet there was no less of dignity

in this impassioned scrutiny. He was more swift than hurried. The images appeared to pass, like the shadows of rapid clouds, over an elevated mind. He seemed to spring at once over the boundaries which separate us from futurity, and to traverse vast tracts of meditation in a single thought. It was not exactly consistent with our notions of Hamlet, but it was a noble portraiture of a man holding discourse with death."*

His acquaintance with Talma was to him a source of infinite gratification, and a theme on which in after years he often used to dwell. His keen appreciation of the subtler arts of recitation, and of those refinements of dramatic enunciation and delivery, of which this great artist is said to have possessed so profound a knowledge, constituted a bond of sympathy between them that took but little time to form. There was, indeed, much that was congenial in their natures: the same "promptitude to feel" deeply and intensely, which manifested itself in private as well as in public, and the same longing for undisturbed repose and thorough love of the tranquillity that the listless and passionless are erroneously believed to be alone fitted to enjoy. To both, long intervals of quietude seemed

* Article on Talma. New Monthly Magazine, July, 1822.

to be the necessary and fitting compensations craved by Nature for the intense excitements she permitted them to crowd into one delicious hour of effort and success. The mutual recognition of many similar traits and characteristics quickly ripened into intimacy what had seemed at the outset likely to prove but a casual acquaintance. This intimacy doubtless suggested much to the youthful dramatist of which he was not slow to avail himself. But it was likewise suggestive of many other things. His ambition was soon to take another turn; and his talk with Talma was, perhaps, all the more enjoyable by both of them, because it involved but little of the spirit or the tone of pupil and teacher. He was far, indeed, from being insensible to the value of the opportunities afforded him of studying, closely and critically, Talma's elaborate elocution. But he felt perplexed by the avowal of impassivity in the delivery of deep and stirring thoughts acquired by constant repetition; and he wisely discarded the notion that to the purposes of popular rhetoric the highly artificial manner of the stage could be suitably applied.

It had been for some time the wish of his family that one of his brothers should seek for public employment in the East India Company's service. A pro-

mise of a cadetship had been obtained through the influence of one of the directors, Sir Robert Campbell: and towards the close of the year, through the intervention of Mr. Woulffe, a second nomination was obtained for a younger brother from Mr. Canning, who then filled the office of President of the Board of Control. Some delay arising in the matter, Mr. Sheil, who took a lively interest in all that concerned the prospects and wishes of his family, proceeded to London in December, accompanied by the two lads, and by his energy succeeded in completing the necessary arrangements, so that they were enabled to set out for their distant destination at the same time. Both did well, and rose in due time to positions of trust and distinction. Of the younger, John, honourable mention is made by Lieutenant-Colonel Smith, in a report of an attack on the Pagoda of Key Kloo, dated 10th October, 1824.* The elder brother, Justin, was likewise distinguished in the Company's service, in which he remained until he was named to the British legation at the Court of Persia, in 1838.

A third brother, Edward, early devoted himself to mercantile pursuits; and having been induced to form some business connexions in South America, he

* Published in the London Gazette, 24th March, 1825.

eventually settled there, and amassed a considerable fortune.

Mr. Sheil's success in dramatic composition was in a degree attributable to the singular power which he possessed, of keeping vividly before his imagination not only a complete picture of the stage, and of the actors and actresses who were intended to support his characters, but also of their appropriate positions and shifting of positions, with every variation of voice and gesture, so that every scene, when finished on paper, might be said to have already gone through a rehearsal in his own mind. It was often said of him that he had a more thorough knowledge of stage-effect than any manager, writer, or actor of his day. Many traces are perceptible that he relied too much upon this power of producing scenic impressions, and that he was tempted thereby to commit the errors incident to haste and carelessness in composition. For the most part his plays were written with great rapidity.

In the autumn of 1819 he completed a fifth tragedy, called the *Huguenot;* and in the winter of the same year he found time for the composition of what perhaps may be more correctly designated a dramatic poem, than in the theatrical sense of the term, a play.

His eagerness to profit by friendly criticism and counsel was closely associated with his ambition to excel. His sense of obligation in this respect to Miss O'Neil, as well as for the "zealous and brilliant exertion of her rare talents,"* was gracefully acknowledged in the dedication to her of a former work. He sought for a suitable occasion to pay a similar tribute of acknowledgment to the friend to whose talents and exertions he felt he likewise owed so much; and meant to inscribe the *Huguenot* to Mr. Macready. The principal character, that of Adolphus, was confessedly written for him, while that of Margaret, by far the most lovable and exalted of the female characters he has drawn, was intended once more to call forth all the passionate tenderness and unaffected dignity of Miss O'Neil. She had accepted the part, and at the beginning of the Covent Garden season our author was again in London, busily engaged in consultations and arrangements for the due production of a work of whose success he not unreasonably entertained confident hopes. But after many weeks had passed in fruitless expectation, "the news of Miss O'Neil's marriage with Sir William Beecher threw author, manager, and actors into a state of despair. Sheil

* *The Apostate*, a Tragedy, &c. Fifth edition. Murray. 1818.

was very anxious for the production of his play, and looked at every actress in the hope of finding a representative of his favourite character of Margaret. But there was only one Miss O'Neil."* There was nothing for it but to postpone for a time the intended performance, and to turn to other thoughts and projects.

Montoni, which he thought fit to designate a "serious drama," was read with no little interest in manuscript, and deemed by those whose judgment he usually sought, well suited for representation. The subject had been already dramatised for one of the French theatres, where it had had considerable success. A castle in Calabria is supposed to be haunted by a spectre, which turns out to be the lord of the chateau, whose troubled conscience causes him to walk in his sleep. The accomplice, who had wrung from his fears of exposure the promise of his daughter's hand, is, in the moment of his triumph, terror-stricken by the supposed apparition, and betrays the secret of their common guilt. Out of these incidents it was not difficult to weave a melo-dramatic poem, affording occasions for the expression of conflicting emotions;—courage palsied by remorse, and parental love para-

* Letter from Mr. Macready, already quoted.

lysed by fear. The grouping is for the most part good, and the situations are throughout well chosen.

Montoni, the usurper of his nephew's inheritance, is summoned by Gregorio, the abbot of a neighbouring monastery, to attend, with other nobles, at the tomb of his murdered brother, that he may join in the invocation of his disembodied spirit. Montoni excuses himself on the ground of his habitual seclusion.

Montoni.—I have found
A woeful plea in the infirmity
That broods upon my spirit—this wan cheek
Will be my sad approver. With an eye
Of pale lack-lustre envy do I see
The wretch that in his raggedness displays
Unto the biting of the mountain wind
A ruddy face of stubborn hardihood.
O'er all my soul the sick and pallid fiend
Of melancholy sits, and fans to ice,
With the slow movement of his yellow wings,
My cold and stagnant blood. 'Tis this of late
Hath made an exile of me from the sight
Of my compeers in nobleness. Yet learn,
Had I not feared mine absence might be deemed
A negligence of your great dignity,
I had not adventured on the moonlight air
At old Gregorio's bidding.
Calatro.—I did pray
My lord to take some mercy on his weal,
But vainly.
Montoni.—Tales like this one, in the wilds
Of our deserted forests, have enjoyed

A mournful prevalence. The shadowy wastes,
The eternal mutterings of the dismal wave,
The solitude's cold taciturnity,
Inspire the mood, where superstition moulds
Its hideous shapes and wildered phantasies.

CHANT.—(*Outside.*)

While the moon shines bright
In the clear cold night,
With our voices so sweet and slow,
In long order due,
Between ivy and yew,
To the lonely aisles we go.
For the troubled dead
In their mould'ring bed
Do list to a holy prayer;
And obey the soft sound
At the burial ground,
Of a sweetly chanted air.
(*Procession enters.*)
And lo, to the place
Where all Adam's race
Must down at last be laid,
We have come with the song,
Which the voices prolong,
Of robed priests and of sainted maid.

* * * * *

Gregorio.—There are who thro' the wilderness have seen
The dreadful phantom, wafted with a slow
And solemn movement; and the dauntless men
Who from tempestuous Ocean win their food,
Have from their barks at night beheld a form,
Wrapped in the folds of its sepulchral robe,
Along the white waste of the moonlight beach
Holding its paceless way.

Montoni.—What action in my life hath given you cause
To think Montoni's soul so seared that, like
The withered leaf of winter in the wind,
I shiver at your breathing? Go, Gregorio,
And teach these mockeries to men are made
Of other stuff than I am. Go, and make
Their minds as soft as the warm wax, to stamp
Your own authority upon their fears,
And be they cowards, that you may be lords!
Well too you have prevailed. This hideous lie,
This monster sprung full-sheeted from your brain,
Affrights Calabria.

* * * * *

Gregorio.—If by the risen dead the murderer
Could be denounced, would not Montoni pray
That Roderick himself should from the grave
Ascend, a horrid witness?
Montoni.—If the proofs
That o'er Sebastian gather, could receive
Such dreadful confirmation from the voice
Breathed from the tomb, I would—
Gregorio.—Roderick arose.
That here he stood before us, in your ear
With horrid attestation to pronounce
Who plunged the murdering knife into his heart,
And give him to our vengeance? Then forefend
That I should bid him back; but with the voice
Of holy conjuration, from the earth
Let me call up the spirit.—Hark, Montoni!
With sad religious holy melody
We summon up the dead. Awake your hymns
And let them reach unto the marble depth,
To raise its slumbering habitant in all
The ghastly vesture of mortality.

HYMN.

First Voice.

Arise from the grave,
And obey the dread spell,
So from all blasts of hell
May thine angel thy sad spirit save.

Chorus.

To human eyes
Sad spirit rise,
And come again
To the world of men;
Arise, arise, arise!

Second Voice.

Spirit, whether of weal or woe,
Wait thine eternal doom:
For virtue or for sin below,
Arise, and burst the tomb.

Third Voice.

If in the dwellings of bliss thou art,
From the mild light of heaven depart;
Or if in purging fires thou pine,
At our sweet song be mercy thine;
And that pale angel at the gates
Of penal sorrow, that awaits
And hears with such a woeful face,
The wailing of that suffering place,
Open the iron portals there,
And render thee to balmy air,
That clad in cold mortality,
Thy bleeding shade we see!

Chorus.

Thine airy limbs around
The solemn shroud be bound,
And may thine opened heart
Show where thou didst depart,
And let the dagger be
Struck in it deathfully;
And speak, that as the heavens have said,
Blood for blood be meetly shed.

In the second act, the exiled heir returns from Palestine, and is introduced to the presence of Montoni, in the disguise of a pilgrim. Montoni questions him of medicinal charms, by which the aching of sick hearts is lulled into repose.

Montoni.—There are of far-famed science, who full oft
Have given me draughts of slumber that have closed
The body's sense, but set the brain on fire;
I ask for sleep, and like the mockers, who
Poured down the miser's throat the burning gold,
For sleep they give me dreams.
Sebastian.—Once you enjoyed
A sweeter quiet?
Montoni.—Once! Oh, the freshful thought
Comes like the recollection of a green
And pleasant garden, with its running streams,
To the faint mariner in the torrid seas.
I once was airy as the morning wind,
And o'er the mountains, on my gallant steed,
Flew at the break of day, in the wild cry
Of the rejoicing chase; my very breath
Heaved from my breast so lightly, there was in

My common respiration of the air
A free, a cheerful, and an open joy.
My spirit, like the feather in my cap,
Dancing unto the music of the breeze,
From every small and trivial circumstance
Felt the sweet stir of pleasure. Now—but I
Can bear with all the rest: I do not hope
(For at mine age the elasticity
Of the young soul is gone) to feel again
The bounding pulse of life in my warm heart;
All that I ask of thee is that thy prayer,
Thy medicine, or thy conjuration, win
One dreamless slumber for me.

Other passages of no little poetic merit might be quoted, but *Montoni*, as a play, had but indifferent success. The secondary characters were ill sustained, and to this circumstance was attributed at the time the little effect which it produced. It must be owned, however, that there is a want of variety and relief in the general tone and colouring. The gloom of supernaturalism alternates only with that of sordid crime, and there is too little development of the better natures that shadowily come and go upon the scene.

Montoni was first performed on the 3rd of May, 1820, and does not appear to have been repeated more than three or four times.

It was about this time that Mr. Banim submitted his play of *Damon and Pythias* to Mr. Sheil, who saw

in it at once much to praise, but likewise the necessity for many and extensive alterations. Their acquaintance had commenced some time before. While on circuit, the name of the future novelist had been mentioned to Mr. Sheil as that of a young man of much promise, who, without the ordinary advantages of higher education, had already evinced signs of considerable literary power. He had composed a volume of poems possessing no little merit; and upon his subsequently asking the opinion of Sheil regarding a work of more pretension, to which he had devoted much care, the latter offered to lay it before Sir Walter Scott, with whom he had himself recently become acquainted, and to ask for the young author the benefit of his judgment and advice. Sir Walter returned a kind and encouraging answer; and soon afterwards, through the intervention of Mr. W. H. Curran, a bookseller named Warren was induced to purchase the copyright, and to undertake the publication of the poem. Sheil was much delighted at this result; and happening to be in London at the time, two promissory notes for the amount agreed on were placed in his hands. The transaction is alluded to in a letter written some time after, apparently on the eve of circuit, in which he says, that in consequence of his departure for Water-

ford, and fearing that Banim might come to town before his return, he had left Mrs. Sheil one of the bills he had got from Warren, in order that it might be delivered to him.

Banim's next effort was the play above referred to, in which he begged of Sheil to make whatever alterations might be necessary. These, after some hesitation, the latter undertook, upon the understanding that the work should be considered as their joint production. A large proportion of the entire was in consequence rewritten. It is still a matter of doubt what passages are to be ascribed to each. The fine scene in the fourth act, where Damon takes leave of his wife and child, is believed to have been written by Banim, while the greater part of the third and fifth acts seems to bear the impress of a more nervous hand. When completed, the play was produced with great *éclat*, and was well received whenever it was performed. The story includes little more than a single incident; but the grouping is highly picturesque, and the dialogue full of feeling and animation. The copyright brought one hundred guineas, and the performance about double that sum. A disagreement unfortunately arose between the joint authors, the origin of which, like that of most foolish

quarrels, it were difficult to assign, and hardly worth while to investigate. It is, perhaps, enough to say, that Sheil received a hundred pounds as his share; and that the dispute caused an estrangement of many years. It never led, however, to any alteration in the tone of generous praise with which he always spoke of Banim's powers as a writer; and there are undoubtedly more than one of his novels which fully justify the opinion. In the course of years, when, on the current of their diverse fortunes they had drifted far apart, Banim found in the literary associate with whom he had foolishly quarrelled, the same ready sympathy and desire to render him service which he had experienced in earlier days.

CHAPTER V.

1821—1823.

Controversy with O'Connell—Law and Literature—*The Fatal Dowry*—The King's Visit to Ireland—Plunket and Saurin—Birth of his son—Death of Mrs. Sheil—Sketches of the Irish bar—Charles Kendal Bushe—Tragedy of *The Huguenot*—Sketch of Saurin.

Mr. Sheil had hitherto enjoyed little political popularity. He had started in public life on the side of the Vetoists, and nothing had occurred to detach him from the more moderate party. By taste and inclination he was naturally drawn towards persons of the class who are apt to incur the reproach of being fastidious, and of lacking earnestness in political affairs. The members of the old Catholic families who occasionally took part in the public proceedings of the body, were looked upon by the multitude with coldness, and by adversaries with contempt. There

was not one man of moral energy amongst them; for all they were capable of doing, or believed that they could do, disability might have attached to their creed to the end of time. Their utmost idea of agitation consisted in the annual reiteration of complaint in petitions to Parliament, worded with such scrupulous care, lest any phrase should offend their condescending advocates in either branch of the legislature, that they seemed almost designed to prove with what entire impunity great wrongs might be inflicted. Every outburst of impatience was reproved by them as injudicious; every word that savoured of menace was anxiously disclaimed as liable to be misconstrued into disloyalty. The history of past relaxations of the penal code, had for the Catholic aristocracy been written in vain. All the concessions hitherto obtained had been wrung from the fears of domination in its hours of need; while to the meanness of meek importunity, little, if anything, had yet been yielded. No one saw their weakness or understood its causes better than the young and ambitious advocate, who shrunk not from bearding the popular favourite when he recommended hot or hazardous measures; and no one strove more sedulously to infuse a worthier spirit into their timid counsels. But they continued to be

haunted by dreams of compromise; and they asked, with the force of seeming truth, if they should alienate, by a change of tone, the friends who now pleaded their cause in Parliament, what was there to fall back upon for support in Ireland?

There was indeed a multitudinous peasantry in the southern counties, and a pauperized populace in the capital and other large towns; but a people there was none. Every institution—fiscal, judicial, municipal, educational—was in the exclusive keeping of the hereditary garrison; and thus every means by which in England during the worst of times public sentiment has found legally recognized expression, was denied to the professors of the outlawed creed. And general combination was a thing unknown. Secret association would have naturally involved the ideas and the dangers of conspiracy; and public yet peaceable agitation, with multitudinous membership, a permanent directory, and a national exchequer, was a riddle yet unsolved. The need of its solution, indeed, O'Connell felt to be indispensable. Yet he likewise felt the importance, if not the necessity, of combining the upper classes with the lower in any movement for their common liberation. Two things then were essential, that the moderate party should be induced to confide in the single-

ness of the object and the safety of the means proposed,—and that the more volatile and inflammable elements of popular passion should be concentrated and directed by him whom they were already accustomed to obey. How were these requisites to be reconciled? No one knew. O'Connell chafed at the thought of indefinite delay, and looked around eagerly, but in vain, for some party already formed or forming, with whom the more democratic section of the Catholics might enter into alliance. Sometimes he imagined it possible that the middle and the working classes of his Protestant fellow-countrymen might be re-animated with the feelings of resentment they had shown at the time of the Union, and be persuaded to join in a cry for its repeal. Again he turned towards the Radicals of England, and was ready to co-operate and combine with them for the attainment of Parliamentary Reform.

In his annual address to the Catholics of Ireland, on the 1st January, 1821, he excited considerable surprise by counselling them to postpone the question of Emancipation for that of Reform. The retirement of Mr. Canning had reduced, he said, their friends in the cabinet to a hopeless minority. It was vain to expect from Parliament, as then constituted, any

effectual measure of relief; and as the petition entrusted to Lord Donoughmore and Mr. Plunket had not been presented in the previous session, he objected to its being considered that of the Catholic body in that of 1821. The promulgation of these sentiments naturally excited much surprise, and by many they were deemed alike inexpedient and unsound. Reform as yet commanded but an inconsiderable minority in the Commons, while in the Lords its name was never heard. The cabinet might be unequally divided regarding Emancipation, but against Reform its members were unanimously agreed. Would it not, therefore, be in the last degree impolitic to adjourn the pursuit of a cause to which already were committed the highest names in the legislature and in the administration itself, for the distant and difficult attainment of an entire change in the representative system? So thought Mr. Plunket and all who acted with him at the time in Parliament. So thought likewise what were termed the moderate party among the Catholics themselves. Mr. Sheil undertook to express their sentiments and his own; and he did so in the following letter:—

"TO THE CATHOLICS OF IRELAND.

"Mr. O'Connell has published his accustomed

annual invocation at the commencement of the new year. To demonstrate the fallacy of his reasoning, and to point out the pernicious tendency of his advice, is my object in addressing you. The concern of every Roman Catholic in our national cause supersedes the sensitiveness with which, upon ordinary occasions, an individual ought to shrink from the public contact. To Mr. O'Connell's address is annexed the authority of his name. I trust that I shall be able to supply any absence of comparative personal importance upon my part, by the weight of argument and of fact; and from the high sense which I entertain of Mr. O'Connell's authority, I cannot refrain from making use of it against himself—

'Nil æquale fuit homini illi!'

I shall state to you the substance of his letter, as well as it can be reduced to coherence and shape. This annual eruption, in which he has flung out such a flaming fragment of declamation, is accompanied with a considerable obscuration, arising from the shower of volatile opinion with which it is attended, nor is it easy to analyse the lava which is compounded out of such a variety of heterogeneous materials.

"Upon his preliminary observations on our grievances

no comment is necessary; suffice it to say that they are written with feeling and force. Did he confine himself to such exercitations, he would be as wise as he is impassioned. I have to do with the practical part of his letter. He advises for the adoption of Parliamentary Reform the abandonment of our petition for relief; he dwells upon Mr. Canning's resignation—insists that Mr. Plunket shall make no tender of what, by a piece of professional dexterity, he calls the Veto—insinuates that the petition already entrusted to Lord Donoughmore and Mr. Plunket ought not to be presented, as some of the petitioners are dead, and because he, forsooth, has changed his mind—and concludes with the singular project of amalgamating (as he terms it) a Quaker into an Irishman. Such are the fashions for January, 1821. Well, then, does Mr. O'Connell really think that you are to be so blinded with all the vapour which he has raised, as to imagine that there exists any connexion whatever between Roman Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary Reform? Whatever may be the sentiment of a Roman Catholic, in his individual capacity, upon that topic, what has his creed to do with it? If we cannot obtain relief for ourselves, what shall we procure for others? If the Roman Catholic question

cannot pass through the prejudices, will Reform overcome the interests of the House of Commons? Mr. O'Connell's reasoning goes to show the weakness of the Catholics—why then ally their imbecility to the cause of Reform? What will that cause gain by Mr. O'Connell's casting a peacock's feather into the scale? Where, too, is the certainty of a reformed parliament passing Emancipation? The penal code was enacted by a Parliament which set at defiance the authority of the Crown. It is notorious that many of the opponents of Reform are the advocates of our cause, and it is strange that, even while Mr. O'Connell expatiates upon its necessity, he sets such a high value upon the support of Mr. Canning, who is a zealous enemy to that measure. He even admits that there was lately a mere majority of one against us in the cabinet, and yet he bids us despair, unless his new nostrum be employed. How different was his language, when scarcely one minister was favourable to our views, and when the late King's opposition operated as an insurmountable barrier for a time! How did Mr. O'Connell speak, when our hopes hung like wet osiers, and it was needful to employ a strong and commanding spirit to lift them from the stagnant despondency over which they drooped? If we

identify our question with Reform, will not the opponents of the latter become our foes? Why accumulate new obstacles in our way? If our question, simplified as it is by plain right and obvious expediency, cannot pass through the needle's eye, will Mr. O'Connell, mounted upon a camel loaded with the Union and Parliamentary Reform, spur the slow and unwieldy animal through the narrow orifice? The Roman Catholics of Ireland do not feel the least inclination to connect themselves with the Reformers. The latter are well aware that we could render them no benefit, and must disarm ourselves. Besides, has it ever occurred to Mr. O'Connell that Catholic Emancipation is to pass the House of Lords as well as the Commons? And what has the purification of one branch of the legislature to do with the success of the Catholic question in another. Perhaps, however, both Houses of Parliament may fall within the comprehensiveness of his projects, and his next address is to blow the mitres of thirty bishops into the paradise of fools. Enough, however, upon this new speculation, upon which it was scarcely worth my while to insist at so much length.

"Let us now examine Mr. O'Connell's assertion that there is no likelihood—nay, that there is no

possibility—of success. It must have been since the month of July last that he made this discovery; nor has he condescended to state by what process he has arrived at this grand political result. The only fact on which he relies is, the resignation of Mr. Canning. He builds upon this single circumstance his ill-constructed fabric of despair. Even if we did lose a vote in the cabinet, as our question is not made a cabinet measure, the loss would not be of much importance. But how has Mr. O'Connell ascertained that the vacancy is to be filled by an opponent of our claims? He conjectures it, indeed, and it is upon his guess-work that the measures of a nation are to be founded? Where are the evidences of hopelessness? Are they to be found in the opening of the army? If this most valuable concession had been wrenched from the ministry—if it had been ushered in with the sound of trumpets—it would be regarded as a great victory; and so it was to those brave men whose laurels had, till then, been blighted by their creed. This was the measure which removed the Whigs from office, and there was, perhaps, a time when it would have been wise to postpone our petition, nor press upon our earnest friends so perplexing a subject. Did Mr. O'Connell, at that

time, advise the Roman Catholics to forbear? No! he reserves this novel doctrine for the present period, and spares this ministry the embarrassment of a question which distracts them, and is the topic on which they differ. But how does Mr. O'Connell act at this juncture? The very moment that he bids you be silent, he is himself most loud. Does he intend to reserve all expatiations upon our grievances to his own oracular self, and are you to forbear petitioning, that he may continue to address? Upon the remainder of Mr. O'Connell's letter I need not occupy you long. From the subject of Reform he suddenly wheels round to Mr. Plunket: men are not always conscious of their own motives, nor does the mind see itself. The patriotism of Mr. O'Connell may be as pure as amber, but even in amber we may find a straw. Mr. O'Connell could not allow any personal feeling to influence him where his country is at stake; yet, in speaking of Mr. Plunket, he says, 'Neither Mr. Plunket nor Mr. Anything-else shall!' The phrase is a transparent one, and the rushlight, with its feeble and fretful fire, is seen behind. It is as clear as glass; it covers, but does not hide. Mr. O'Connell does not deal very candidly, when he says that Mr. Plunket shall not offer the Veto. Mr. Plunket

has already distinctly stated that as the Catholics disapprove of the Veto, it should be abandoned. As to the particular form in which the question may be brought forward, let me remind Mr. O'Connell that upon his proposing, at a very mumerous meeting, a resolution expressive of the unwillingness of the Roman Catholic body to accede to any ecclesiastical arrangement, that resolution was carried by a majority of only six; and when it was communicated to Mr. Plunket, he answered that he should act as he deemed it meet. Let him remember that several of the parishes of Dublin confided their petitions to Mr. Plunket, without the annexation of any resolution whatsoever to control him in the exercise of his discretion. Upon that occasion, when Mr. O'Connell revived the unhappy question of the Veto, I read several passages from his address of January, 1819, in which, after dwelling upon the value of a silk gown, he advises that the subject of the Veto should be buried in utter silence, says that it is not in the power of the Roman Catholics to prevent its real operation, and intimates that it is already in force.

"One would have hoped that after these opinions, deliberately set down in all the permanence of ink, Mr. O'Connell would hardly have adventured upon a

resuscitation of the topic. But inconsistency has no terror for him. In his present address, indeed, he states that he firmly believes in the Roman Catholic religion: I presume he also believed in it in 1819; I hope, too, he does not enjoy a monopoly of faith; nor will the public be inclined to think that such a man as Lord Fingall affords less practical evidence of his creed than any of its more clamorous professors.

"Mr. O'Connell (and that I take to be the gist of his address) intimates that the petition which has been entrusted to Lord Donoughmore and Mr. Plunket ought not to be presented by them. He says, of the numerous persons who signed that petition some must be dead—is it the petition of the dead men? Really, when we read arguments of this sort, knowing the ability of the advocate, we must think lamentably of the cause. It is the drowning grasp of a sophist in the agonies of confutation. Even in an ordinary action, the death of one of several parties shall not abate a suit; and shall the imperial cause of Ireland perish in the death of John Stiles? He also says that some of the petitioners are abroad, and therefore have no interest. What has become of Mr. O'Connell's patriotism? He gives in this opinion a bad sample of the Irishman into which he wishes to

transmute every sect. Does he mean to say that an absence from this country would wash all its sufferings from his memory? It is said that an orator of antiquity had a flute-player always beside him to sound the key by which his voice was to be pitched. It were well if Mr. O'Connell would, before he pens his next address, renovate his languid love of country with the '*Exile of Erin.*' Mr. O'Connell also says that he has changed his mind. If in the midst of a debate upon a petition of thousands, a single individual was so rash before the House of Commons as to exclaim, 'I have changed my mind—I disclaim the petition, though I have signed it,' should this person, by throwing a pebble into the stream, stop the whole current of a great proceeding? Let Mr. O'Connell remember that all these arguments of his are as applicable to every former petition as to the present. Our petitions are generally submitted to Mr. Grattan seven or eight months before they are presented. Did Mr. O'Connell ever allege that some of the petitioners were dead, or absent, or had changed their minds? Mr. O'Connell insists that the resolution entrusting our petitions to Lord Donoughmore and Mr. Grattan contained a clause that they would be presented forthwith, or immediately, he forgets which. A person who

builds an argument upon a word, and does not remember it, shows what sort of validity he sets upon it. Does Mr. O'Connell really mean to non-suit the Catholics of Ireland; and is it with a 'forthwith' that he is to upset the cause of his country? But neither Mr. O'Connell nor 'Mr. Anything-else,' to borrow his own phraseology, shall dictate to the Catholic body; and I must inform him, that he wants the power to do ill. The petition was given to Lord Donoughmore and to Mr. Plunket that it might be presented as soon as possible, and it was not possible to present it during the last session, when the Queen's case blocked up all the avenues of the state. To this Mr. O'Connell, however, pays no attention, nor does he affect to know that the question at that time before the legislature was of so absorbing a character as to render every other topic, for the moment, of comparative insignificance. It is not in the shocks of an earthquake that a house is to be repaired. But to oppose arguments of this sort is to combat with shadows: neither Lord Donoughmore, our faithful advocate, nor Mr. Plunket, the legitimate successor of Mr. Grattan, will be swayed by such futilities. The latter gentleman knows the value of all the points of law made by Mr. O'Connell. He will not be much disturbed by

any splenetic pleading. He is placed upon an eminence which Mr. O'Connell's addresses and harangues cannot reach.

> 'The murmuring surge
> That on th' unnumbered idle pebbles chafes,
> Cannot be heard so high.'

"Mr. Plunket well knows that Mr. O'Connell does not speak the sentiments of the Roman Catholic body; once, indeed, by following, he appeared to guide. By a flexible accordance between his sense of public duty, with his love of popular praise, he served for some time to indicate the varieties of popular excitation. I should be loth to compare him to a sort of political vane, by which all the veerings of the breezes might be determined; but it were as idle to imagine that the currents of air on which the balloon is borne are regulated by the painted machine that floats upon them, as to suppose that a person swelled out with the very inflammable patriotism of Mr. O'Connell, and raised by the very levity of his opinions, should create the vicissitudes of passion on which he ascends. That gentleman was certainly elevated in a very gaudy vehicle, embellished with every diversity of hue. He had risen with the shout of the multitude, and after throwing out all his ballast, and waving his green

flag, he very skilfully adapted his course in this aerial voyage to all the mutations of impulse which agitated the stormy medium through which he passed, until at last, in attempting to rise into a still more lofty region, he has allowed the thin and combustible materials of his buoyancy to take fire, and comes tumbling down in a volume of fiery vapour, composed of the Veto, the Union, and Parliamentary Reform.

"RICHARD SHEIL."

To this O'Connell published, on the 12th of January, a reply full of caustic humour. "He was at a loss to know how he had provoked the tragic wrath and noble ire of his Iambic rhapsodist. It seemed to him that anything so unprovoked never appeared in the annals of causeless incivility. He had set out in a passion, and had preserved his inconsistency to the end; and yet, after all, he would venture to wager that, like the rabid animal in the fable, Mr. Sheil was not half so mad as he pretended to be. . . . . . He had begun by calling him a '*flaming fragment*,' next he was '*lava*,' and thirdly, '*heterogeneous materials*.'"

After marshalling the other metaphors of his antagonist in grotesque array, he professes to put aside all these as "tawdry and tinsel decorations of melo-

dramatic oratory" unsuitable to the gravity of the subject. Recapitulating the grounds of his former opinion, "that an unreformed Parliament could not emancipate the Catholics," he concluded thus: "Mr. Sheil was no doubt, in his own opinion, a diamond of the first water: he was heartily welcome to sparkle at his expense; but he implored of him, with all the earnestness of the plainest prose, to refrain from his sneering sarcasms, directed against, after all, the finest as well as the most faithful—the long-suffering and very wretched people of Ireland."*

Mr. Sheil was much irritated at certain insinuations of mercenary motives which the reply contained; and he consulted his friends, Mr. Ball, Mr. Woulffe, and Mr. W. H. Curran, as to whether he had not a right to call his antagonist to personal account. They found it at first difficult to convince him that, however bitter the retort he had provoked, political invective must be fairly distinguished from personal insult, and that an ineffectual attempt to fix a quarrel upon one whom he had first assailed would only serve to lower him in public estimation. At length he yielded: "I see it now," he exclaimed, "I'll think no more of the matter; I'll go home and finish my tragedy." This contro-

* Memoir of O'Connell, by his Son. Vol. ii., p. 309.

versy, while it served to injure the general cause, tended to weaken still further whatever claim Mr. Sheil may have had on popular favour. He turned aside once more from politics, in which no path for him seemed likely to open of usefulness or distinction; and again busied himself, as formerly, with law and literature. One who passed much time in his society at this period describes him as being still without profitable business at the bar; but as, nevertheless, continuing to keep up his professional reading with diligence. Many an interval was snatched, indeed, from graver study, and devoted to the classics, works of travel, modern fiction, and the elder dramatists. He had many projects of poetic composition, some original, and others connected with the adaptation of old and obsolete plays for the modern stage. Amongst the latter was one which he proposed to Mr. Macready, respecting the *Maids' Tragedy*, which, if partly re-written, he conceived might be rendered highly popular and effective. This project was never executed; but another was about the same time suggested to him, which he entered into with his customary zeal and spirit, and which eventually proved eminently successful. This was the adaptation of Massinger's almost forgotten play of *The Fatal Dowry*. On the

modern stage the dialogue, as it stands in the original text, would certainly not be producible. There are, moreover, defects in the construction of the plot, which must under any circumstances have rendered it difficult to sustain the interest sufficiently to the end. Both faults disappear in the adaptation. The two most effective scenes, that between Romont and Young Novall in the fourth act, and that with which the fifth act closes, between Charolois and the father of his bride, are well worthy of being associated with those that have been left unchanged from the pen of Massinger. Beside other alterations, nearly the whole of the latter part of the play was rewritten. When finished, it was submitted to the committee of Covent Garden Theatre, Messrs. Kemble, Willett, and Forbes, who declined acting it. It was, however, produced at Drury Lane in the winter of 1824, and had a splendid success the first night. On the second night Mr. Macready, who sustained the principal character, was suddenly struck down by illness, and as he did not again appear for more than three months, the *prestige* attending its first production was lost. It remains on the list of acting plays, but no effort seems to have been subsequently made to present it, in a manner worthy of its many and genuine claims to public attention.

In the summer of 1821, the intended visit of *George IV. to Ireland was announced. Sanguine anticipations,* soon to be dispelled, were thereby created. "His visit was regarded as the result of high political design, and not of vitiated appetite for applause. No one imagined that his object was merely to ascertain the difference of intonation between the shouts of an English and an Irish mob. The Orange party conceived that the liberation of Ireland entered into the royal purposes of George IV. They well knew that such a project would have been easy of achievement, and made a tender of amnesty, if not of peace. Political opponents met and broke bread together. The king came. The air was rent with applause. The Catholics suppressed all utterance of their wrongs. The king left an injunction of peace as a precious gift, and amidst the acclamation of a whole, and an apparently united people, bade them an affectionate farewell. Love each other, said the king; hate each other, said the law; and the law was speedily obeyed."*

A change in the Irish administration seems to have been resolved upon soon after the departure of the king. It was at first contemplated to have the Duke

* Speech of Mr. Sheil, 21st January, 1822.

of Wellington as viceroy, but this idea was quickly *laid aside, lest it should seem an admission that the* condition of Ireland needed the presence of a military chief at the head of local affairs. Such is the only reason stated by the Home Secretary in the despatch which recalled Lord Talbot. There is reason to believe, however, that other considerations had their weight in the preference given by ministers to the Marquis Wellesley, whose success as an administrator in difficult times in India was assigned as the determining cause of his appointment as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He had long been amongst the most distinguished advocates of the Catholic claims, of which his brother was equally well understood to be an opponent; and, however little intention may have been felt, either by George IV. or his Ministers, of endeavouring to realise the hopes of equality which he had not scrupled to excite among his Catholic subjects during his stay amonst them, it was deemed expedient to make some show of sincerity, and to prolong, as much as possible, the sedative illusion. The Green Riband had been conferred on the Earl of Fingall; and the Catholic bishops had been received by the sovereign, wearing the insignia of their office, and had been addressed by him by titles denoting their rank. To what extent might not expedients of

a similar kind be pushed by a courtly and sagacious viceroy, who had himself given proofs, moreover, that the favours he might officially confer were, in his mind, but a trivial foretaste of that equality which Parliament alone could yield?

But then there was the danger of alienating the Ascendancy party, whose power and influence had hitherto been undisputed and supreme. This danger neither Lord Liverpool nor his colleagues had any mind to brave. Their majorities in Parliament during the past session had, on more than one trying occasion, almost wholly disappeared; and the state of popular feeling in England was not calculated to induce them to hazard the loss of the support they had been accustomed to receive in both Houses from the Irish Tories. The double purpose of the cabinet is hardly veiled in the confidential letter of Lord Sidmouth, already referred to. "Being most anxious that the Irish Government should be so constituted as to conciliate the confidence both of Protestants and Roman Catholics, Lord Liverpool and the other members of the cabinet conceived that object could not be more effectually accomplished than by the association of Mr. Goulburn with Lord Wellesley, as chief secretary."* And

* Letter to Mr. C. Grant, 29th Nov., 1821. Life of Lord Sidmouth. Vol. iii., p. 337.

thus, while it was hoped that the expectations of one party might be vaguely cherished by the nomination of a liberal viceroy, it was supposed that the apprehensions of the other might be as effectually appeased by the appointment of a chief secretary who was generally believed to be a member of the Orange Society. The Chancellor, Lord Manners, the vice-treasurer, Sir George Hill, and, what was more important than either, the under-secretary, Mr. Gregory, were retained, each and all of them being stanch partizans of Ascendancy.

On the other hand, Mr. Bushe remained Solicitor-General, while Mr. Plunket was appointed Attorney-General, in the room of Mr. Saurin, who, indignant at being compelled to make way for his rival, and mortified at finding himself no longer trusted by those whom he had zealously served, refused to be promoted to the Chief-justiceship of the King's Bench. Lord Wellesley had stipulated, however, for this change, as indispensable. Mr. Saurin was not a member of the House of Commons, while Mr. Plunket occupied a pre-eminent station there; and Lord Wellesley foresaw that for the difficult part he had undertaken to play, he would often stand in need of a defender, at once intimately acquainted with facts and

motives, and possessing at the same time the promptitude and discretion of a skilful debater. But besides all this, Mr. Plunket was justly regarded, since the death of Mr. Grattan, as the foremost man amongst the advocates of Catholic claims at the Irish bar, and in the Irish representation. His appointment, therefore,* could scarcely be regarded in any other light than as an earnest of better things to come. Mr. Saurin, on the other hand, was universally looked upon as the soul of the exclusive system; and his removal, more than any other personal change, perhaps, which could at the time have taken place, was calculated to damp the confidence of men in its permanency. A letter was indeed addressed to Lord Manners by the Home Secretary, containing the assurance that "conciliation, not concession" was the principle about to be followed in the government of Ireland, whither Lord Wellesley was sent to "administer the laws, and not to urge an alteration of them: and that, in his conduct towards Catholics and Protestants, no distinction but what was made by law would be made by his secretary."*

While, by these confidential assurances, it was hoped

* Letter from Lord Sidmouth, 12th Dec., 1821. Life. Vol. iii., p. 381.

that the suspicions of the ascendant classes might be allayed, pains were taken to foster the hopes which the Catholics had been led, by the language and manner of the king, during his recent visit, to entertain. A meeting to congratulate Lord Wellesley on his appointment took place on the 7th January, 1822, at which Lord Fingall presided, and at which an address was moved by Mr. O'Connell, and seconded by Mr. Sheil. The address was from the pen of the latter, and briefly but clearly indicated that its congratulations were not merely suggested by the recollection that the noble Marquis was the first Irishman since the days of Ormond that had been named as the delegate of the Crown, or the circumstance "that his fame had been long cherished by the people of Ireland as a portion of their national renown." It avowed the sanguine expectation that a wiser and a more generous policy had been determined on, and their hope that the appointment of the new viceroy might be deemed its inauguration.

A few days after this, an event of domestic interest occurred, from which Mr. Sheil anticipated much increase of happiness. He had been some years married, without having had any children. On the 9th of January his only son was born, and after a short in-

terval his wife was able to receive the congratulations of her friends, and seemed likely to regain her usual health. She was soon afterwards, however, seized with fever, which in a short time terminated fatally. An intimate friend who visited him immediately after this melancholy event, found him engaged in the perusal of certain portions of Scripture, which he referred to with deep emotion. Thus, at the moment when he had most reason to look forward to the comforts and enjoyments of a home, he was unexpectedly left companionless. He sought occupation more than ever in his books and papers; and in addition to the literary works which had heretofore occupied so much of his attention, he was led to enter upon a new and hitherto untried field of literary labour, in which, during several years subsequently, he was destined to gain no inconsiderable reputation.

It was during the year 1822 that the first of the well-known series of papers, entitled "Sketches of the Irish Bar," appeared in the "New Monthly Magazine." It presented a striking and characteristic delineation of Mr. Plunket, then Attorney-General, and afterwards Chancellor of Ireland. The conception and execution of this remarkable portrait were alike masterly and original. His early career at the bar and in the Irish House of Commons was picturesquely

treated, while his actual position, as occupying an eminent place in his profession, both officially and by the higher title which public opinion can alone confer, was at once defined and accounted for. His singular combination of powers as a reasoner and an advocate were not merely enumerated in the cold method of analysis, but were so finely touched and discriminated, with a pencil at once critical and creative, that those who had never listened to the searching voice, or shrunk before the withering sarcasm of the great orator, were made to feel that they could realize in some degree the strength and the force which he wielded. No man whom Ireland has sent to the united parliament ever extorted such tributes of admiration at the same time from the impressible many and the fastidious few. Numerous testimonies to this effect might be adduced from the cotemporary memoirs of those who had enjoyed the opportunities of hearing him in debate, or meeting him in society; and yet it was not so much from observing him in either that the author of the sketch alluded to professed to form a judgment regarding him. The Court of Chancery, over which Lord Manners then presided, but in which Mr. Plunket ruled with unacknowledged but unrivalled sway, was the scene specially chosen as

that wherein the ordinary exercise of his rare faculties might be best appreciated.

The author of this admirable sketch was Mr. William Henry Curran, the son and biographer of the illustrious orator whose name he bears. He had for some years been the intimate friend of Mr. Sheil, who, with his assent, undertook to co-operate with him in the task which had been thus so felicitously begun. The series extended over several succeeding years; and as its joint authorship was known but to few, the greater portion, if not the whole of the merit, was sometimes erroneously ascribed to the subject of the present memoir. It is only right, however, that while his share in these contributions is correctly stated, that of Mr. Curran should likewise be known. To the pen of the latter are to be attributed the biographical portraits of Lord Plunket, Mr. O'Connell,* Mr. Serjeant Goold, Mr. North, Mr. Wallace, and Mr. Doherty, afterwards chief justice of the Common Pleas, in

* When the sketch of Mr. O'Connell was announced, he evinced no little curiosity as to the tone it would assume, being evidently uncertain as to how he was to be dealt with. He was under the impression then, as many have subsequently been, that it was from the pen of Mr. Sheil. A few days after the publication, his first expression on meeting a friend who had been aware of his anxiety on the subject, was,—"I am satisfied; they may say what they like of me now."

addition to which must be added three papers, entitled "The Hall of the Four Courts," "Confessions of a Junior Barrister," and "An Irish Circuit." Mr. Sheil's contributions to the series were somewhat more numerous, and many of them were well worthy of being associated with those of his friend. Perhaps the best, as it seems to have been the most carefully written, is that of which the subject was the eloquent and accomplished Charles Kendal Bushe.

Those who remember the personal appearance and manner of Mr. Bushe will hardly fail to recognise the following description:—

"In bringing the remembrance of other speakers of eminence to my contemplation, their several faculties and endowments present themselves in a different order, according to the proportions of excellence to each other which they respectively bear. In thinking, for example, of Mr. Fox, the torrent of his vehement and overwhelming logic is first before me. If I should pass to his celebrated antagonist, I repose upon the majesty of his amplification—the wit of Sheridan, the blazing imagination and the fantastic drollery of Curran, the forensic and simple vigour of Erskine, and the rapid, versatile and incessant intensity of Plunket—are the first associations which connect themselves with their respective names. But there is no one peculiar faculty of mind which suggests itself, in the first instance, as the characteristic of Mr. Bushe, and which presses into the van of his qualifications as a public speaker. The corporeal image of the man himself is brought at once into the memory. I do not think of any one distinguishing attribute in the shape of a single intellectual abstraction—it is a picture I have before me. There is a

certain rhetorical heroism in the expression of his countenance, when enlightened and inflamed, which I have not witnessed in the face of other men. The complexion is too sanguineous and ruddy; but has no murkiness or impurity in its flush. It is indicative of great fulness, but at the same time of great vigour of temperament. The forehead is more lofty than expansive, and suggests itself to be the residence of an elevated, rather than of a comprehensive mind. It is not so much 'the dome of thought' as 'the palace of the soul.' It has none of the deep furrows and intellectual indentures which are observable in the forehead of Plunket, but is smooth, polished, and marble. The eyes are large, globular and blue, extremely animated with ideas, but without any of that diffusive irradiation which belongs to the expression of genius. They are filled with a serene light, but have not much brilliancy or fire. The mind within them seems, however, to be all activity and life, and to combine a singular mixture of intensity and deliberation. But the mouth is the most remarkable feature in his countenance: it is endowed with the greatest variety of sentiment, and contains a rare assemblage of oratorical qualities. It is characteristic of force, fineness and precision, and is at once affable and commanding, proud and kind, tender and impassioned, accurate and vehement, generous and sarcastic, and is capable of the most conciliating softness and the most impetuous ire. Yet there is something artificial about it, from a lurking consciousness of its own expression. Its smile is the great instrument of its effects, but appears to be too systematic; yet it is susceptible of the nicest gradations; it merely flashes and disappears, or in practised obedience to the will, streams over the whole countenance in a broad and permanent illumination; at one moment it just passes over the lips and dies at the instant of its birth, and at another it bursts out in an exuberant and overflowing joyousness, and seems caught in the fulness of its hilarity from the face of Comus himself. But it is to satire that it is principally and most effectually applied. It is the glitter of the poisoned sneer that is levelled at the

heart. His gesture is of the first order; it is finished and rounded with that perfect care which the orators of antiquity bestowed upon the external graces of eloquence. But it is the voice of this fine speaker which contains the master-spell of his perfections. His style and diction are remarkably perspicuous and clear, but are deficient in depth; he has a remarkable facility in the use of simple and unelaborated expression, and every word drops of its own accord into that part of the sentence to which it most properly belongs. The most accurate ear could not easily detect a single harshness or one inharmonious concurrence of sounds in the course of his longest and most premeditated speech.* But at the same time there is some want of power in his phraseology which is not either very original or picturesque. He indulges little in his imagination, from a dread, perhaps, of

* A remarkable confirmation of this estimate of his style is to be found in Lord Brougham's historic sketch of this eminent and accomplished person, written after an interval of more than twenty years.

"I had the great pleasure of his acquaintance, and I also, on one remarkable occasion, saw him examined as a witness, before the Irish committee of 1839. . . . . The choice of his words was most felicitous: it always seemed as if the form of expression was selected which was the most peculiarly adapted to convey the meaning with perfect simplicity and without the least matter of exaggeration or softening. . . . . There was shed over the whole the grace of a delivery altogether singular for its combined suavity and dignity. All that one had heard of the wonderful fascination of his manner, both at the bar and upon the bench, became easily credible to those who heard his evidence. . . . . . . His power of narration has not perhaps been equalled. If any one would see this in its greatest perfection, he has only to read the inimitable speech on the Trimblestone cause: the narration of Livy himself does not surpass that great effort."

falling into those errors to which his countrymen are so prone. . . . . . . Curran, with all his imperfections, would frequently redeem the obscurity of his language by a single expression that threw a wide and piercing illumination far around him, and left a track of splendour upon the memory of his audience which was slow to pass away. The wit of Mr. Bushe is perfectly gentlemanlike and pure. It is full of smooth mockery and playfulness, and dallies with its victim with a sort of feline elegance and grace. But its gripe is not the less deadly for its procrastination. His wit has more of the qualities of railery than imagination. He does not accumulate grotesque images together, or surprise by the distance of the objects between which he discovers an analogy. He has nothing of that spirit of whim which pervaded the oratory of Curran and made his mind appear, at moments, like a transmigration of Hogarth."*

To some the terms of eulogy and admiration in which Plunket and Bushe are spoken of in these Sketches may possibly seem excessive. A calmer and more dispassionate, though certainly not less discriminating, judge has recorded the impression which a few years later these eminent persons left upon his mind. Sir James Mackintosh, speaking of Bushe and Plunket, when in 1827 the one presided in the Court of King's Bench, and the other in the Court of Common Pleas, said, "Perhaps there have been as

* Sketches of the Irish Bar, No. II. New Monthly Mag. Oct. 1822. Before the article from which the above quoted passages are taken, had appeared in print, Mr. Bushe was raised to the dignity of chief justice of the King's Bench, which he enjoyed until the year 1842.

great lawyers, but two such accomplished men never before filled the situation together." He repeated what had he said some years before, that "Lord Plunket, had he been regularly trained to a British House of Commons, would have been the greatest speaker there that he remembered."*

The *Huguenot* still lay over, without having been played. A species of tantalization which neither the remembrance of earlier or more recent success was fitted to allay. Covent Garden no longer indeed possessed the singular combination of talents which had lent such powerful aid to the illustration of every piece that was presented during previous years. There were intrinsic merits, however, in the composition, that more than justified the hope that even though less powerfully represented, it would meet with appreciation and applause. The story is taken from one of the old chronicles of the League. Polignac, one of the Huguenot chiefs, having been provoked by unwonted insult to assassinate a noble of the Catholic party, is saved from the punishment of his crime by the heroic assumption of its guilt by his son. In prison garb, and with the crimson brand of murder on his arm, the latter is presented as deploring less

* Memoirs of Sir J. Mackintosh. Vol. ii., p. 437.

his personal humiliation than the consequent forfeiture of her esteem whose young heart he had won. Margaret is still true to him, but is urged by consideration for her father's loss of fortune to receive the importunate suit of Montville. Within the precincts of his prison Adolphus hears the notes of a familiar song.

Adol.—Hush! it is there;
'Tis there again! it melts—it flows upon me—
The falling dew refreshes all my soul,
Barren and flowerless as it is. Stay, stay,
Kind spirit, do not fly away from me;
Waft thee not back to heaven! It hears me not,
But in the dissolution of the air,
More faint, and as more faint more beautiful,
Dies of its own sad sweetness.
La Roche.—It hath moved you.
Adol.—It is an air I have heard in happier times;
You wonder that I weep, sir; yes, you do!
I have heard it said permission has been given
To certain fallen spirits to abide,
Until the arrival of the ending day,
Within the moon's pale glimmerings, where they lie
Stretched on the frozen beams in agony.
If one of them ('tis a wild phantasy,
And yet it might be so) in the dead night
Should hear a sound of heaven come melting down
The stars' cold solitudes, that did recal
The memory of that heaven, and the sad thought
Of some dear angel that, before its fall,
Had loved and had not quite forgotten it

After, do you not think, if essences
Of a superior nature can shed tears,
That spirit, though condemned eternally,
Might weep, and you perceive that—Hush! 'tis there!

(*Song heard outside.*)

Star of evening, thou to me
Bring'st mournful thoughts for company;
Thou art the planet of love, 'tis said,
And so perhaps for some thou art;
But to the cold and withered heart
Thou bearest the pain of pleasures fled
And hopes long dead.

Adol.—That voice! that voice! Oh speak to me!
That voice?

(*Song continued.*)

Sweet star, thou shouldst not look so glad,
That in reality art sad—
The brilliant herald of decay;
For like consumption's shining eye,
Within that rich and hectic sky
Thou showest how soon the rosy day
Will die away.*

The struggle between Margaret's devotion to her father, whose exigences are pressing, and fidelity to Adolphus, of whose fate she is ignorant, is prolonged through the second act. She consents at length to be wedded to Montville, but desires that the rite shall be performed in that part of the church where

* Act i., scene 1.

her mother lies entombed. While the procession is advancing to the appointed place, the prisoner is told of the approaching nuptials, and, breaking from his guards, makes his way through the crowd as the celebration is about to begin.

La Roche.—Begin the sacred hymn. (*Aside to Margaret.*)
Be of good heart,
Margaret.—Oh fear me not, La Roche. I have wrought
at last
My resolution into constancy.
A spirit rises up from the cold grave
And breathes itself upon me: I am now
Determined and made up for misery.

HYMN.

In the soft language of the skies,
In sweet aerial music call,
On two fond lovers all
The bliss in human hope that lies,
And let no harm appal
Their fond united hearts, until the day
When, in the natural decay
Of life, they pass away.
[*The music of the organ continues.*
Romont.—(*Aside to Margaret.*) Margaret, restrain
yourself, your shivering hands,
Your trembling limbs, and blanched countenance,
White as a shroud—for my sake, my dear child,
And for your mother's sake, my darling child!

HYMN.

Within each trusting bosom be
The light of a holy constancy;

Be theirs the pure and artless smile,
Void of effort, free from guile,
A soft reflection of the mind,
Calm and good and bright and kind;
May their even lives be spent
In peace, affection, and content,
And every pair hereafter pray
To be as blest and true as they.

* * * * *

La Roche.—(*Beginning the ceremony.*) John de Montville.
[*Enter Adolphus, with frantic aspect.*

Adol.—Hold; I command you! Do not dare to breathe
Thy cursed spell upon them: Priest, let fall
The hand thou hast raised up to consecrate
The damned mockery; and you that there
Hold to each other by the foulest touch
That e'er made fast a perjury, let go
Your impious clasp. I sunder you—I burst
Your faithless bonds to pieces,—do you hear me?
There are a hundred echoes that take up
And turn my voice to thunder! Hark! 'tis sent
Back from the vaulted aisles—the very walls
Exclaim against you—the cold stone
Beneath your feet cries out—the sepulchre
Uprises and the dead take part with me.

Mont.—What art thou?

Adol.—What am I? ask it of her.
Oh ask that question of that woman there,
If that indeed I have not blasted her
To senseless stone already. Margaret,
Can you not tell him who I am? Enquire,
If you should need it of her; she can tell you
Much better than myself.

* * * * *

Adol.—She faints, and as she faints, a parting beam
Of transport shone about her. There was in
The closing daylight of her holy face
A light as pure, and bright, and beautiful
As ever filled up heaven; and there she lies,
Still as the dead, with all the loveliness
Of life as yet about her, and I may,
Like an enamoured mourner of the tomb,
Gaze, thus enrapt, upon her!
Mont.—Romont,
Can you expound this marvel?
Romont.—I cannot
Entrust my sense with its habitual faith.
Mont.—'Tis a strange rival that I find, my Lord—
A convict, and a murderer?
Adol.—Hush! I pray you
Breathe not the terrible and ghastly word,
Lest it awake her from the beautiful
Undreaming sleep she lies in. Well I know
She did not mark the badge of infamy
That cleaves here like a vulture; for her face—
Her face was like the sun when she beheld me,—
It was all one bright joy.
La Roche.—Romont, I charge you—
For more I know of this strange accident
Than it beseems me speak—to bear away
Your child as fast as possible. My Lord,
This rite must be deferred a little while:
Romont, I will assist you.
Adol.—Nay—not yet—
Bear her not yet for ever from my sight;
While yet she smiles—for see, she smiles; her face
Yet beams the light of gladness, tho' the soul
Hath sunk behind its beauty;—while she smiles,
Let me behold her! Let me feed my sight

With one long gaze upon her: never more
Shall we two meet in this dark world. I charge you,
Stay yet a moment. Oh! she's gone for ever!
But she will ne'er be thine. (*Turning to Montville*).

On returning to their home, they find the door closed against them by officers, who have taken possession of the house, under the direction of an inexorable creditor. Romont expostulates, but is refused admittance. He turns to his daughter, from whose nuptials he had hoped for rescue from the humiliation and pain of penury, and in the bitterness of his breaking heart exclaims—

Romont.—Come hither;
Give me thy hand! here are two ducats for thee,
'Tis all I have; buy bread with it, and get thee
A coverlet to-night. It will be a cold one.
I do not part in anger from thee, child.
Child, I don't curse thee. If thy tears should salt
The bread thou eatest, it shall not be made
More bitter for my malediction.
But I pray Heaven that we may never meet
Upon the earth again!—May God forgive thee!
[*Exit Romont.*

Margaret.—'Twas lately in my heart, but now I feel it
Shooting out of my bosom to my brain:
All round is desolate and empty; thro' [*Rain.*
The long-drawn streets there's not a footfall heard;
The storm has no companion left but me—
But me and my poor father! Yet we two
No more shall bear each other company.
What an' if I did seek my mother's grave,

It were, methinks, a melancholy joy
To live for ever in that ancient church,
And sitting there upon a long flat stone,
Like any speechless statue of them all,
To emulate their coldness and the deep
Quiescence of their marble attitudes.
And I shall o'er my mother's monument
Dŏ the sad office of those sculptured forms
We were not rich enough to raise to her.
Oh! I shall play my part in such a still
And motionless affliction, that methinks
Even he would never recognise me there;
Or if he did, he could not blame me for
My cold eternal wedding with the grave.
[*The bell tolls.*
Ah, me! I hoped the pattering of the storm
Had muffled up this long and maddening sound;
I would to God I did not hear thee; but
Now that I hear, I needs must follow thee.
[*Exit wildly.*

Mr. Sheil's unwillingness that the representation of the play should be any longer postponed, is alluded to in a letter to Mr. Curran, who happened to be in London during the latter part of September. "I have finished another tragedy, and it is better than anything I have yet done, so that I have many inducements to go over, *if* Macready be there in time. Ascertain for me, if possible, the exact day of his arrival; and if you cannot learn it now, inform me of it as soon as you can; but

let it be something certain." Preparations were soon afterwards made for its production in the approaching season.

Great pains were taken by Mr. Macready previous to its production, the part originally written for Miss O'Neil was undertaken by Miss Kelly, while that of Montville devolved on Mr. Abbott, who, at one of the rehearsals, somewhat disconcerted the other performers by suddenly exclaiming—" 'Twill never do, the title is most objectionable." When asked to explain what he meant, Abbott, with his usual levity, began to laugh, and said, " Can't you guess? Some scamp will pun upon the name, and cry after the first act,—*You-go-not!*" The jest was of evil augury to the jester as well as to the play. On the first night of its performance, it became speedily evident that Mr. Abbott was very imperfect in his part. By the audience, however, many verbal errors passed undetected, and many omissions were unperceived. But upon himself and those who were playing along with him the vexation and misgivings which these faults occasioned, had a far worse effect. It was impossible to tell where his memory or self-possession might altogether fail him; and instead of being absorbed in

their own characters respectively, their attention was involuntarily distracted throughout by his short-comings. To complete the ill-luck of the evening, the person who was to have represented the officer sent to take possession of Romont's house, was taken ill during the performance, and being unable to appear, a substitute was found in an individual wholly unacquainted with the part. Where the father, in the fourth act, claims admission to his dwelling, the substituted officer of the law became very nervous, but contrived to deliver the first few words—"Sir, I am sorry for the task mine office has imposed upon me." But, in reply to the old man's expostulation, instead of uttering the words—"Even so, you must not blame me, sir," he became confused, coughed, hesitated, and at length stammered out, "I can't help it, it's none of my fault." This drew down shouts of laughter from the audience, who, doubtless, gave the author credit for the language. Abbott was conscious that he had been the principal cause of the ill-success of the piece, and confessed it to the audience when soliciting for a second hearing. The next night there were fewer actual mistakes, but an unfavourable impression had been created; the representation, as a whole, was

inefficient, and its further repetition was not deemed desirable. "Had Miss O'Neil performed the character of Margaret," says Mr. Macready, "I make no doubt that the success of the play would have equalled at least that of any of its predecessors. My own character was quite equal in its power upon the audience, to the effect of my most successful personations in other plays, but I was worse than alone. Had it not been for the miserable mounting of it, it must have been eminently successful."*

The disagreeable tidings were conveyed to the author in a letter from his friend, who shared in the ill-success he felt to be undeserved, and who was capable therefore of sympathizing in the mortification he knew that it must bring. The letter arrived in the evening, while Mr. Sheil was enjoying the company of two professional friends; and was couched in terms intended to put the best face on the affair. It alluded to some complimentary expressions which had fallen from persons of judgment regarding the composition; and was accompanied by copies of two or three of the journals in which favourable notices had appeared. But the truth was to be concealed as little as the chagrin which it occasioned. "This is a blow!"

* Letter from Mr. Macready, 9th Feb., 1854.

he exclaimed, and continued silent for some time. Then, as if he had during the interval made up his mind not to suffer the disappointment to appear, he said cheerfully, "Well, I believe this may be a useful lesson, though not very pleasant in the learning; I see that I had much better dedicate my thoughts to pleading instead of poetry; let the drama alone, and stick to the briefs. What say you?" he added, addressing one of his companions. There would probably have been no other advice given by his forensic friend upon any occasion; but under the painful circumstances in question, the opportunity for confirming so prudent a resolve was not to be thrown away; and the conversation soon turned on professional prospects and plans.

Mr. Sheil thought, and perhaps with reason, more highly of the *Huguenot*, as a whole, than of any of his preceding dramatic works. Its failure was on this account all the more mortifying, and contributed in no slight degree to turn his ambition from a path which had proved to him beset with disappointment, though not unilluminated by success, into that for which he was undoubtedly better suited, and through which he was destined to reach a more enduring fame. He continued to take interest in matters connected

with the stage. A new play, more especially when he was acquainted with the author, seldom failed to excite his curiosity and sympathy, and in the various fortune of those with whom he had become personally acquainted as performers, he continued to take no little concern. His intimacy with Mr. Macready subsisted without interruption during his life; and many who, as writers or as players, were associated in his memory with his own dramatic days, found in him a kind and considerate friend.

In his second contribution to the "Sketches of the Irish Bar," he undertook to delineate the character of Mr. Saurin, who had for many years occupied the foremost place in his profession, and whose influence in the Administrative Government of Ireland from 1808 to 1822 had, not without reason, been predominant. After noticing the incidents of his earlier life—his manful struggle against the Union—his refusal to enter the Imperial Parliament, even with the advantages which official position would have given him—his complete ascendency over the mind of Lord Manners—his just indignation when suddenly thrown overboard by the crew of the ship he had so long faithfully steered—and his angry rejection of the chief seat in the King's Bench—the sketch proceeds:—

"He is now plain Mr. Saurin again, and he bears this reverse with a great deal of apparent and some real fortitude. When he was first deprived of his office I watched him in the Hall. The public eye was upon him; and the consciousness of general observation in calamity inflicts peculiar pain. The joyous alacrity of Plunket was less a matter of comment than the resigned demeanour of his fallen rival. Richard was as much gazed at as Bolingbroke. It was said by most of those who saw him that he looked as cheerful as ever. In fact he looked more cheerful, and that appeared to me to give evidence of the constraint which he had put upon himself. There was a forced hilarity about him—he wore an alertness and vivacity which were not made for his temperament; his genuine smile is flexible and easy; but upon this occasion it lingered with a mechanical procrastination upon the lips, which showed that it did not take its origin at the heart. There was also too ready a proffer of the hand to his old friends, who gave him a warm but a silent squeeze. I thought him a subject for study, and followed him into the Court of Chancery. He discharged his business with more than his accustomed diligence and skill; but when his part was done, and he bent his head over a huge brief, the pages of which he seemed to turn without a consciousness of their contents, I heard him heave at intervals a low sigh. When he returned again to the Hall, I observed him in a moment of professional leisure, while he was busied with his own solitary thoughts, and I could perceive a gradual languor stealing over the melancholy mirth which he had been personating before. His figure, too, was bent and depressed, as he walked back to the Court of Chancery, and before he passed through the green curtains which divide it from the Hall, I have seen him pause for an instant, and throw a look back at the King's Bench. It was momentary, but too full of expression to be casual, and seemed to unite in its despondency a deep sense of the injury which he had sustained from his friends, and the more painful injury which he had inflicted upon himself.

"If Rembrandt were living in our times he should paint a por-

trait of Saurin: his countenance and deportment would afford an appropriate subject for the shadowy pencil of that great artist. There should be no gradual melting of colours into each other; there should be no softness of touch and no nice variety of hue; there should be no sky—no flames—no drapery—no marble; but a grand sober-minded man should stand upon the canvas, with the greater proportion of his figure in opacity and shadow, and with a strong line of light breaking through a monastic window upon his corrugated brow. His countenance is less serene than tranquil; it has much deliberate consideration, but little depth or wisdom; its whole expression is peculiarly quiet and subdued. His eye is black and wily, and glitters under the mass of a rugged and shaggy eyebrow. . . . . His whole demeanour bespeaks neither dignity nor meanness. There is no fraud about him; but there is a disguise of his emotions which borders upon guile. His passions are violent, and are rather covered than suppressed; they have little effect upon his exterior—the iron stove scarcely glows with the intensity of its internal fire. He looks altogether a worldly and sagacious man—sly, cunning, and considerate—not ungenerous, but by no means exalted—with some sentiment, but no sensibility—kind in his impulses, and warped by involuntary prejudice; gifted with the power of dissembling his own feelings, rather than of assuming the character of other men; more acute than comprehensive, more subtle than refined; a man of point and of detail; no adventurer either in conduct or speculation; a lover of usage, and an enemy to innovation; perfectly simple and unaffected; one who can bear adversity well, and prosperity still better; a little downcast in ill-fortune, and not at all supercilious in success; something of a republican by nature, but fashioned by circumstances into a tory; moral, but not pious; decent, but not devout; honourable, but not chivalrous; affectionate, but not tender;—a man who could go far to serve a friend, and a good way to hurt a foe; and, take him for all in all, a useful and estimable member of society."*

* New Monthly Mag., February, 1823.

In the course of the same year there appeared likewise from his pen, in the "New Monthly," sketches of Mr. Joy, who had succeeded Mr. Bushe as Solicitor-General, and of Mr. Sergeant Lefroy. His other contributions to the same periodical in 1822 and 1823 were "Recollections of Talma," already quoted; a review of Casimir Delavigne's play, "Les Vêpres Siciliennes;" and the articles entitled "State of Parties in Dublin," which contain several graphic etchings of the political groups most prominent at the time in the Irish metropolis.

CHAPTER VI.

1823—1824.

Catholic Association—Administration of justice; petition and debate thereon—Epigram on Baron M'Clelland—Religious education—Polemics—Archbishop Magee—Lord Cloncurry on Repeal—Influence of the Association—Agrarianism—The forfeited estates; Lord Redesdale—Appeal to the English people—Prosecution of O'Connell—Mr. Plunket.

The condition of things existing in Ireland at the beginning of the year 1823, with reference to the question of Catholic emancipation, as contrasted with that which soon afterwards arose, was thus described by Mr. Sheil: "An entire cessation of Catholic meetings had taken place. We had virtually abandoned the question; not only was it not debated in Parliament, but in Ireland there was neither committee, board, nor association. The result was that a total

stagnation of public feeling took place, and I do not *exaggerate when I say that the Catholic question was nearly forgotten;* all public meetings had ceased; no angry resolutions issued from public bodies; no exciting speeches appeared in the public papers; the monstrous abuses of the Church Establishment—the frightful evils of political monopoly—the hideous anomaly in the whole structure of our civil institutions—the unnatural ascendency of a handful of men over an immense and powerful population—all these, and the other just and legitimate causes of public exasperation, were gradually dropping out of the national memory. The country was then in a state of comparative repose, but it was a degrading and unwholesome tranquillity. We sat down like galley-slaves in a calm. A general stagnation diffused itself over the national feelings. The public pulse had stopped; the circulation of all generous sentiment had been arrested, and (if I may use the expression) the country was palsied to the heart. What was the result? It was twofold. The question receded in England, and fell back from the general notice. There it was utterly forgotten, while in Ireland the spirit and energy of the people underwent an utter relaxation, and the most vigorous efforts were neces-

sary to repair all the moral deterioration which the *whole body of the Irish Catholics had sustained.*"*

But how was this to be done? Various schemes of popular organization had been revolved from time to time in the fertile brain of O'Connell; but that which eventually commended itself above all others to his judgment was one which, while it reserved to persons of better education a controlling power, provided for the enrolment of the masses of the people as associate members of the body, the former, on payment of one guinea, and the latter on payment of one shilling a year. This plan was first suggested by him in conversation with a few intimate friends, of whom Mr. Sheil was one, at Glencullen, which was then the residence of Mr. T. O'Mara. The difficulties which it was felt must be encountered were freely canvassed, and it was agreed that the more comprehensive and democratic portion of the scheme should not at the outset be attempted. But the absolute necessity of some means of combination had become generally felt by all who were not content to relinquish the hope of civil equality. What continuous

* Speech at Catholic meeting, in Dublin, 22nd Sept., 1827.—"The people of England care little either about the rights of the Catholics or their own."—Notes by Sir R. Heron (1823), p. 152.

and systematic political agitation really meant, or might practically accomplish, nobody then knew. There were indeed many still living who recollected the uprise and popular sway of the volunteers; but the armed embodiment of the aristocracy and middle classes for national defence, however capable of being directed under an elective system of officers and commanders to purposes of a political kind, afforded no precedent or example for an association like that which was then contemplated. The Society of United Irishmen, one of whose professed objects had originally been the emancipation of the Catholics, and the singular completeness of whose internal constitution had enabled it to enrol and discipline vast numbers of the population, afforded an example only to be avoided. The one was the improvisation of a national militia by the propertied and privileged classes—the other the conspiracy of the disfranchised many. Both sought to achieve a political reform: the one by overawing the Government, the other by undermining it; and both failed, with arms in their hands—the volunteers, because they were unable to enlist the sympathy and support of the people—the United Irishmen, because they had to encounter the hostility of nearly the whole of the upper classes of the community. It

was clear, moreover, that the Government, warned by experience, were resolved never again to allow any form of political delegation to exist, and the Convention Act supplied them with the ready and effectual means of crushing any attempt at national organization which should seem to be directed in this manner. If therefore the new scheme was to be successful, it must invite and secure the co-operation of persons of every degree; to win the confidence of the wealthier classes it must avoid every semblance of illegality or enmity to the established order of things; and yet it must, to kindle the smouldering passions of an infuriated and oppressed people, deal fearlessly with those many-sided questions about which the opulent and the poor, the well-born and the humble, can seldom, if ever, be expected cordially to agree. All this, and much else long since forgotten, occupied the energetic and sagacious mind of the future "Agitator," and filled with new and vigorous thoughts the creative imagination of men who were destined so largely to contribute to the ultimate success of the proposed plan.

A few individuals agreed to meet in Dublin in the last week of April to consult together on the subject. At these preliminary meetings, which were held on

the 25th and 30th of that month, the requisite preparations were made for summoning together the leading persons of influence in the Catholic body to inaugurate the contemplated association. The 12th of May was fixed upon for the purpose, and a committee named to make the arrangements necessary. The day arrived, the ardent projectors were punctually in attendance, and, after some delay, Lord Killeen* was called to the chair. Speeches were made urging the necessity of union and exertion, and between fifty and sixty gentlemen enrolled themselves as members. Such was the beginning of the most remarkable society perhaps of modern times—remarkable for the difficulty of the task it undertook to perform—the apparent poverty of the resources at its command, and the peaceful triumph which, within a few years, was destined to attend its efforts.

A petition to both Houses of Parliament, setting forth the manifold abuses then existing in the administration of justice, was on the 14th of June submitted by Mr. Sheil for the adoption of the Association. It was prepared with great care, and depicted in striking terms the varied and complex system of partiality and unfairness of which every tribunal in

* The present Earl of Fingall.

the land afforded daily examples. Not only were all judicial and ministerial offices of consideration filled by persons of the governing creed, but in the selection of magistrates and jurors the same odious and oppressive preference was shown. The exclusive character of the magistracy, and the essentially lawless manner in which they frequently exercised their summary jurisdiction, had contributed in no slight degree to widen the chasm between the owners and occupiers of the soil. All hope and faith in even-handed justice between man and man, when the disputants belonged to opposite sects or conflicting classes, had become extinguished in the bosoms of the many. Their hearts were hardened by injustice: was it strange that when opportunities of revenge arose they seemed to be incapable of mercy or discrimination? The Catholic peasant who had fallen under the suspicion of his landlord was summoned to attend him in private, and there to abide whatever sentence his worship, sitting alone, and influenced by hate, caprice, or passion, might think proper to award. In more serious matters, the accused found himself arraigned before a judge who harangued the grand jury on the duty of bigotry, the policy of exclusion, and the necessity of making examples of all whose demeanour betrayed an insub-

ordinate spirit: and when true bills had been found, the miserable prisoner was told to look upon the twelve most notorious partisans whom a trusty sheriff could select, and to prepare to abide by their verdict. Then came that most fearful of all mockeries, the mockery of a fair trial, where counsel, witnesses, and jurors seemed to be animated by a common sympathy, and to vie with one another in the legal work of striking terror, as it was called, into the rebel race. The scene, which closed with an invective from the bench, instead of a grave and calm sentence, was speedily followed by the infliction of penalties which nothing can sanction, in the eyes of the community, but the conviction that, however severe, they have at least been impartially inflicted. Had there never been instances of fatal blunders as to personal identity and reckless confusion as to degrees of guilt, the manner in which criminal justice was frequently administered would have sufficed to deprive its decrees of all moral sanction.* The victims of the law came to be regarded as martyrs, and the number of executions and

* A learned and accomplished friend of the author, now no more, used to say that when, as a young man on circuit, he listened to Lord Norbury charging a jury in a capital case, or sentencing the prisoner, he felt as though he heard a butcher sharpening his knife.

banishments were counted up by the peasantry as the casualties of the social war in which they were engaged with the hereditary garrison of the country.

A deep sense of the barbarising tendency of this system had early impressed itself on the mind of Mr. Sheil, and at all times and under circumstances the most unpropitious, we shall find him earnestly striving for its overthrow. The first important step taken by him in the newly-organized association, was directed to this object. The petition, which sought for inquiry into the mode of administering the laws, was entrusted for presentation in the Upper House to Earl Grey, and in the Lower to Mr. Brougham.

In the Commons the petition was described by Mr. Brougham as stating the subject of "complaint with no less accuracy than force of language;" and having been printed, he moved that it be referred to what was called the Grand Committee on Courts of Justice. Mr. Goulburn, as Secretary for Ireland, objected to this course as one which, in point of form, had fallen into long disuse, and further because no specific instances were set forth, while to the general tenour of the allegations he would give a comprehensive denial. Mr. Daly and Mr. Martin, members for Galway, conceiving, perhaps not wholly without reason,

that some of the statements made in the petition were founded on malpractices in their own county, angrily denounced those from whom it had proceeded. They were followed in a similar strain by others, while the motion was supported by Sir Henry Parnell, Mr. Hutchinson, and Mr. Abercrombie. At the conclusion of the debate, the Home Secretary, Mr. Peel, spoke at considerable length, reiterating the objections already urged with respect to the generality of the imputations, and the absence of circumstantial details regarding particular instances. He wished "to rescue the Catholics of Ireland from the charge of having prepared or transmitted so inflammatory a petition, or of having been privy to or in any way connected with it, couched as it was in such unbecoming, he had almost said such ferocious language; he discredited all insinuations thrown out against the selection of magistrates, sheriffs, and jurors; and would resist any reference to a committee of a petition which he characterised as being more in the declamatory style of a condemned tragedy, than of a grave representation to the Legislature."*

The allusion to the writer of the petition does not appear to have been understood by the House, and the

* Hansard. Sess. 1823. Vol. ix., p. 1306.

sneer so deliberately aimed seemed to fall harmless. But its barb was not unfelt, because the wound was at the moment unseen. In Ireland the authorship of the petition was known. A laugh was raised, and when attention is diverted from the nature of a grievance to a joke regarding its description, the end of the minister is, for the moment, gained.

The challenge, however, which had been thrown out, as to substantiation by proof, was promptly taken up in the association.* No immediate result in Parliament followed; but attention once aroused on the subject, was never afterwards suffered to sleep. Slowly but steadily salutary reforms were introduced; and before the end of his political career, Mr. Sheil had the satisfaction of beholding the eradication of nearly all the abuses which in 1823 were either defended or denied.

An epigram in which the name of Mr. Martin was introduced, but the point of which was directed against another individual, may be mentioned here. The member for Galway, whose efforts to obtain an Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals had won for him the sobriquet of "*Humanity Dick*," had become involved at the previous assizes in a highly

* See Proceedings of Meeting, 5th July, 1823.

indecorous altercation with Baron M'Clelland. This learned personage, although not wanting in judicial ability, was unhappily distinguished by irritability of temper and uncouthness of manner, which exposed him frequently to sarcastic rebukes from the bar.* Mr. Martin pronounced a long philippic against him in the House of Commons, and vowed further vengeance. A group in the hall of the Four Courts happened to be discussing the merits of the edifying controversy, when Mr. Sheil, who had been a silent listener for some minutes, suddenly interjaculated,

"Dick, your example to your precept suit,
M'Clelland spare; have mercy on a brute!"

For some time the principal difficulty the new association had to encounter was that of obtaining the attendance of a sufficient number of persons to constitute a meeting. So deep was the apathy then prevailing, that on more than one occasion ten individuals could not be found to form a quorum within half an hour of the time appointed; and one of the funda-

* An eminent practitioner, who had on one occasion persevered in reiterating several times the arguments in support of his case, was at length interrupted by the impatient Baron with the inquiry, "Am I to remain here for ever, to be baited like a bear upon a chain?" "No, my lord," was the reply, "nothing can be more unlike a bear *upon a chair*."

mental rules required, that in such cases an adjournment to the following week should take place, as a matter of course. In O'Connell's anxiety to be present, he might be often seen leaving the court, where he was busily occupied, ere it rose, passing quickly through the robing-room, and hurrying to the place where the earlier meetings of the association were held. This was in a small room in the house of Mr. Coyne, a bookseller, in Capel Street. Great was his vexation at finding on his arrival that he made but the seventh or eighth member present; and when the time prescribed was nearly exhausted, he would sometimes repair to the shop, in the hope of finding there some of his acquaintances, whom he might persuade to spare a few minutes in order to make up the necessary number.

A polemical tone characterised frequently the earlier proceedings of the agitation. This arose less from a desire on the part of men like Mr. Sheil to invite theological dispute, than from the difficulty of avoiding it when challenged thereto by others. The zeal for proselytism had induced many persons of the Established Church to endeavour to direct all the means of popular education to that end. The Charter-schools had indeed been established for the purpose long

before; but the property assigned for their support had by degrees been appropriated in great part to private uses, and when a commission of inquiry subsequently reported on the state of those establishments, disclosures were made of peculation, cruelty, and neglect, to an extent that afforded an ample theme for denunciation by the eloquent tribune of the people.* The schools which had recently been established throughout the country by the voluntary aid and under the superintendence of the Kildare Place Society, became likewise the objects of sectarian suspicion. By the rules of the society all controversial teaching was forbidden, and many persons had subscribed to its funds in the belief that it offered to the children of the poor the benefits of united education, without incurring any just liability to the charge of seeking to disturb the particular convictions in which those of each sect were brought up. But as the reading of the Scriptures without note or comment was made an indispensable condition of instruction for all the pupils, great objection was made on the part of the Catholic clergy in general, and by not a few of those who entertained what are usually called high church views among the hierarchy and clergy of the

* Speech of Mr. Sheil in Association, 4th Dec., 1825.

Established Church. Those, on the other hand, who held evangelical opinions in the Anglican communion, together with the dissenters of all denominations, adhered unwaveringly to what they regarded as an essential principle; and having a decided predominance in the councils of the society, no deviation from the rule regarding the Bible was under any circumstances allowed. Many benevolent and pious individuals, whose sincerity in their attachment to low church opinions admitted of no doubt, expressed from time to time their desire that some conciliatory scheme might be devised, that would afford to all the benefits in common of a sound, moral, and intellectual education, without favouring distinctive tenets or offending the peculiar susceptibilities of any. The Catholics earnestly supported this view, but by the managers of the Kildare Place Society it was as strenuously resisted; and Government, which refused to take upon itself the responsibility of national education, continued year after year to obtain from Parliament the grant of 30,000*l.*, which was placed at their absolute disposal.

Such an appropriation of the public money, in a country whose whole ecclesiastical property was devoted to the maintenance of the religion of a small

minority of the people, could not, under any circumstances, perhaps have failed to cause great discontent. But when the Government, who thus partially applied the proceeds of general taxation, were engaged in actively resisting the claims of the discontented to political privileges, the feeling of educational injustice served but to add to the sense of religious wrong. And when, in addition to all this, there came the proclamation of a controversial war, and the avowal of designs and hopes for the conversion of the many to the faith of the few, the irritation and animosity between the rival creeds became, as was inevitable, more violent than it had ever been. Attack provoked retaliation; denunciations of the canons of Lateran and Trent were answered by invectives against the vacillating standards of faith enacted and enforced by the Parliaments of the Tudors; and the cruelties of the reign of Mary were contrasted with the statutable atrocities enacted in the time of Anne. Polemical sarcasm and retort became habitual ingredients in the rhetoric of the forum. Journalism of all kinds was saturated with the poison; and the most sacred associations were, on both sides, remorselessly turned into food for bitter jest. Few speakers or writers of the period wholly escaped a contagion so subtle and per-

vading; and in those whose minds were quick with idealism and wit, its influence was peculiarly shown. On several occasions Mr. Sheil selected as the subjects of elaborate irony and descriptive caricature those who had rendered themselves conspicuous by their anti-Catholic zeal. Among the most remarkable of these were Archbishop Magee and Mr. Sergeant Lefroy. His Grace was a man of learning and parts, who had raised himself, unaided by fortune or connexions, to a distinguished position in the University of Dublin. The early friend of Mr. Plunket, and his intimate in maturer years, he had throughout his academic career professed as much political liberality as could perhaps have been expected from a shrewd and ambitious fellow of Trinity College, in the dark and dreary times in which he lived. Soon after his elevation, however, to the metropolitan see, he took occasion, when delivering a pastoral charge, to renounce the tolerant opinions which had recommended him to the viceregal favour of Lord Wellesley, and to declare himself the champion of exclusive orthodoxy. He admonished his hearers to be thankful that their creed and ritual severed them as widely from Geneva as from Rome; and with impartial insolence he contrived to offend in a single sentence the feelings both of the Dissenters

and the Catholics. The former, he declared, had "a religion without a church, and the latter a church without a religion." These and several ebullitions of archiepiscopal conceit soon became the favourite themes of reproach and sarcasm; while certain peculiarities of person and deportment afforded food for popular ridicule. His lithe and erect figure on horseback was daily seen moving through the streets of the city with an air of prelatical pride and pedantic coxcombry, that to the lovers of a laugh was irresistible. "Does he not look," said Sheil, "like a compound of Cardinal Wolsey and Dr. Syntax?" Frequent allusions occur in the proceedings of the association to the vast wealth of the Establishment, and to the supercilious bearing which characterised too often the upper grades of the hierarchy.* The following may be taken as a specimen of the serious raillery which the anti-national spirit of the Anglican church in Ireland at that time provoked :—

"Let me suppose that the spirit of Plato were submitted to some necromantic process of resuscitation, and that after he had revisited 'glimpses of the moon,' the task of effecting his posthumous conversion to Christianity were committed to the pious divine, whose meek and apostolic forehead has been recently invested with the archiepiscopal mitre of the metropolis.

* Speech; 1st May, 1827.

Let me be permitted to imagine, that the ex-fellow of the University of Dublin were to revert to those early occupations from which his sacred prosperity is derived; that he were entrusted with the religious education of the reanimated philosopher, and that, having again become tutor, he should have Plato for his pupil. I pass by the preliminaries of introduction between these distinguished personages, and say nothing of the astonishment of Plato, at the episcopal jauntiness of air and the volatile agility of demeanour which characterise the learned Doctor. Let me imagine the wonder of Plato to have subsided at the novelty of this our modern world, in which the Doctor performs so important a part, and that after having been contented upon the other subjects of his admiration, he exclaimed, 'Where are the gods of the old time? What has become of Jupiter? Does the thunder no longer roll at his behest? What has befallen the martial maid to whom Athens had devoted her peculiar adoration? Where is the sublime worship of the god of poetry and light? Has he been flung, like his own adventurous boy, from the chariot of the sun?' To this interrogatory the Doctor replies, 'These graceful but unholy products of the idolatrous imagination of your country have returned into the nothingness from which they rose. These dreams of a fabulous creed have passed away, and that of which you, or your master Socrates, in one of your noblest dialogues, have given a prophetic intimation, has been realized, in a pure and celestial system of worship and of faith. There came from heaven a Being whose precepts carry an internal evidence of their divinity, and who, to use your own words of remote prediction, 'hath taught us to pray.' His coming was not announced in thunder, nor was his mission illustrated with flashes of lightning. His arrival on the earth was told in the solitude of the night, and in a peaceful and lonely song to 'shepherds abiding in the mountains.' He descended as an emissary of that Godhead of which he was at once a messenger and an emanation, in the lowliest form with which miserable humanity could be invested. His whole life was as simple as his birth was obscure. The poor,

the sorrowful, and the unfortunate were his companions. His only pomp consisted in the grandeur of his revelations, and even their sublimity was tempered by the meekness of his moral inculcations; mercy dwelt for ever on his lips, and diffused its tender attributes over all his actions. Humility was deified in his person. It was from the throne of shame and suffering that he proclaimed himself a monarch, and his last act of moral sovereignty was the pathetic cry of forgiveness, at the remembrance of which, the infidel of Geneva could not refrain from lapsing into an involuntary credulity, and exclaiming, in the spirit of the soldier who attended his agony, that if the death of Socrates was the death of a saint, the death of Jesus was that of God. His disciples participated in the divine character of their preceptor, and the twelve inspired teachers of his eternal word propagated his doctrines with the humility of him from whom they had received them. The spirit of their religion was typified by the meekness of a dove. They went forth with naked feet, and with scarce enough of raiment to shield them from the inclemency of the air. They spent their lives in the fasting and the prayer which they prescribed; they taught mankind that there was a sanctity in suffering, and a blessedness in tears; that life was a brief and miserable transition to that heaven towards which their eyes were for ever turned; and that the kingdom of Jesus was not of this world. Such were the first propagators of that sublime religion in which I have undertaken to give you instructions. I am one of the anointed representatives of those inspired, but meek and patient men—and in me you behold a successor of the apostles.' 'You!' Plato would exclaim; and I leave you to conjecture the expression of surprise that would needs invest the features of the philosopher, in the utterance of the monosyllabic ejaculation of astonishment. The Doctor (let us suppose) proceeds to give the gospel to Plato, who peruses the holy writings, and afterwards returns to his preceptor in humility. 'I have read,' he may be imagined to say, 'I have read the wonderful book which you have placed in my hands, and I confess that all

the volumes of philosophy vanish before it. It is impressed with the seal of inspiration, and its pages are the records of heaven. In my own visions of perfection, I never reached, even in conjecture, to a point of moral sublimity which could be compared with the incalculable elevation of this superhuman system of goodness, of mercy, and of love. But, Doctor, forgive me for asking you whether you participate in that high conviction which it is your profession to impart?' 'I!' cries the Doctor; 'what a question to the Author of the Atonement!' 'I hear, indeed,' the philosopher might reply, 'that you yourself made an atonement, but without a sacrifice. You have expiated certain deviations into liberality, into which you wandered before your advancement to the glittering top from which you superintend and overlook the religion of Jesus. Doctor, I must be candid with you: of course I cannot controvert the truth of your asseveration, but I own I never should have taken you to be a successor of the humble philosophers of Palestine. You remind me more of some of the spruce and acrimonious disputants called Sophists, who used of old to infest the groves of the Academy. You tell me that the mildness of your master was expressed by the softness of the dove; your own spirit would find its emblem in the proud and predatory falcon. You are a preceptor of forgiveness, while your pen distils virulence in every word—your lips, that should breathe nothing but mercy, are smeared with the poison of polemics. You leave venom in your very kiss of peace; even your pastoral injunctions, that should be the effusions of tenderness and pity, overflow with bitterness and gall. You have sent an arrow, in the shape of a barbed antithesis, to rankle in the heart of your country. You and your brother pontiffs talk of poverty, while the yearly income you derive from the public would, at the rate of Athenian exchange, amount to several talents. You speak of humility, while you tread on the tip-toe of importance, and haughtiness sits mitred on your brow. You prescribe the ascetic regimen of self-denial, while you quaff the richest nectar out of silver and gold. You

are lapped in down, while you bid your followers make their couch of the frozen earth; and you are over-canopied with purple, while you tell them that a Christian should have no other roof but the cope of heaven above his head. From the banquet of Dives you hold up Lazarus to imitation. Your palaces outvie the temples of the fallen gods; and you have substituted yourselves for the idols you deride.' "*

During a visit which he paid to Lord Cloncurry at Lyons, his seat in Kildare, he was consulted regarding certain views, which his Lordship soon afterwards propounded in a letter addressed to the association. These were in substance a dissuasion of the Catholics from the hopeless pursuit, as he deemed it, of religious equality by means of a separate agitation; and a proposal to substitute in its stead a combination of men of different creeds for the recovery of an independent legislature for Ireland. Mr. Sheil endeavoured to convince him of the impracticable nature of his plan. Sectarian agitation was unquestionably a great evil, and tended of necessity to confirm the hostility which it had been the aim of bad government to foster between the separate races that inhabited the same country. But so long as the law continued to recognise the right of domination as the political inheritance of the minority, it was vain to suppose that they

* Speech in Association, February, 1824.

would ever cordially amalgamate with those whose submission they could not but despise. "United Irishmen," mutually trusting and trusted—one in every five of whom had been brought up in the belief that the other four were unworthy of freedom and unfit for its enjoyment, while these in their turn regarded him as an accomplice in their degradation—had been the dream of Fitzgerald, Emmett, and Tone; but it had ended, like all other dreams, in disenchantment. If ever nationality of the true and legitimate kind was to spring up in Ireland, the ploughshare of equal laws must first be driven through the soil. Homogeneity of resentments and regrets for the past was not enough; there must be unity of spirit and of purpose as to the future, or national combination there could be none deserving of the name. Such arguments, however, failed of convincing Lord Cloncurry; and Mr. O'Connell, though more disposed to concur in his views, publicly stated that, as the association had been formed specifically for the attainment of religious freedom, the question of the Union must at all events be postponed.

Topics of a more practical kind continued to form the staple of popular discussion. Cases of individual hardship or oppression were brought under public

notice; and the sufferings of a remote village would often form the theme of eloquent and prolonged debate, which, when reported and disseminated through the medium of weekly journals in every part of the country, produced results wholly unexampled. "The speeches delivered in the association were read; and, whatever their defects in style, and however widely they might have departed from the rules of pure and simple oratory, still they contained a powerful appeal to the feelings of the people; their degraded position was presented to them in its just light; they were called to look upon their own shame, and were made to blush at the turpitude of their condition. Truths of a most painful and exasperating kind were told. The Catholic aristocrat was made to feel that his ancient blood, which slavery had made stagnant in his veins, was of no avail to him; from the proudest nobleman to the meanest serf, the whole body were rendered sensible of their inferior position in the state. The stigma was pointed at; men became exasperated at their grievances when they were aroused to their perception; a mirror was held up to Ireland to show her her own degraded image, and when she beheld the brand upon her forehead, it

began to burn."* The Catholic Rent, at first but an experiment, became a new source of power. It was not the mere aggregate of humble offerings, though these soon swelled to many thousands of pounds—it was the spread of a vast system of civic enlistment, which the regular payment into the popular treasury of small sums denoted, that constituted its chief importance. "Everywhere 'the Rent' raised a subsidiary association. The 'Rent collection' soon settled into a system; the collectors became the disciplined, as the Rent-contributors were the irregular, troops of the association."†

The agitation thus organized and stimulated began to be regarded with no little uneasiness by the Government. Its democratic character and tendency were obvious. In a long misgoverned and deeply disaffected country it formed a tribunate unrecognised indeed by law, but powerful in that which can alone impart to law inherent strength and sanction—public opinion. The freedom of discussion which was permitted, served to invite the public exposure of every description of grievance which the southern peasantry

* Speech of Mr. Sheil, in separate Catholic Meeting, 22nd September, 1827.

† Hist. Catholic Association, vol. i., p. 209, by Mr. Wyse, now British Minister at Athens.

endured. Local oppression and general distress alike found not only a voice, but sympathy and attention. Social questions were soon inevitably intermingled with controversies respecting political wrongs. To the landed proprietor, the lawyer, and the priest, the indignity of exclusion from political rank and station was a sentiment more animating than any sense of the actual loss which such disqualification entailed. But when the farmer and shopkeeper became enlisted in the movement, they naturally embodied in their day-dream of emancipation, results in which they looked for more substantial ameliorations of their own condition. The splendid benefits held forth in fervid eloquence by the leaders of the movement, as certain to flow from the accomplishment of their designs, were frequently translated by the peasantry into prophecies of a golden age about to come, in which all the grievances and hardships whereof they complained, connected with the tenure of land and the collection of tithes, would for ever disappear. Restless and plotting men, by whom at all times agrarian combinations have been too easily led in Ireland, did not fail to turn to their own purposes the exciting language of Mr. O'Connell and Mr. Sheil; and there were not wanting among their opponents

credulous or ingenious persons, who incessantly laboured to connect the prædial disturbances and secret societies, which then widely prevailed, with the stimulating speeches uttered in the association.

To all who are acquainted with the real history of agrarian discontent and agrarian conspiracies in Ireland, the injustice of the imputation was indeed sufficiently plain. For sixty years preceding, secret societies —under the various names of *Hearts-of-Oak*, *Peep-o'-Day Boys*, and *Defenders*—had maintained, with brief intermissions, against the authority of the magistracy and the Government, a species of servile war, the horrors of which have too often been recounted to need a repetition here. In 1822, disturbance and outrage had reached a dreadful climax, and it needed the utmost exertions of the Executive to restore the southern counties of the kingdom to something like security and order. But as had often been the case before, the tranquillity imposed by the unaided efficacy of severe and rigorous measures proved of but brief duration. The old causes led anew to the effects before produced. Property and life were not indeed so insecure during 1824 as they had been in 1822, when political agitation was yet in its cradle, and when its cries could hardly be heard; but there was still enough to serve the

purposes of party; and from a distance the true relations of things was not easily discerned. Among many of the great absentee proprietors, serious alarms were entertained for the stability of their Irish possessions; and we find the panic shared even by persons in England, who had had peculiar opportunities of learning by observation the true sources of prædial disaffection, and how little its real objects were connected with political aims. Lord Redesdale, who for several years had filled the office of Chancellor of Ireland, thus writes in December 1824, to Lord Eldon:—

"No one reads impartially the history of Ireland. Read impartially, it cannot be denied that the mere Irish had, at all times, much ground for complaint. That the separation of Ireland from England is the object of the Irish Roman Catholics, I have no doubt. Without that separation, they can neither make the Catholic religion the established religion of Ireland, nor give to the mere Irish the forfeited lands in Ireland."* And recurring to the same subject a few days later,† he says, "The priests and the lower orders of Catholics are urged by hopes and expectations of plunder. The higher orders, I have no doubt,

* Life of Lord Eldon, vol. ii., p. 530.
† Idem. p. 531.

secretly dread the consequences; and especially those who are of English blood. The Irish families who have embraced the Protestant religion know that they are considered as renegades, and that they have as little mercy to expect as the Protestants of English blood. They know that, if the Catholics should prevail, the marriage of their parents, if solemnized by a Protestant clergyman, and the legitimacy of their birth will be denied; the titles to their lands will not be disputed by claimants of forfeited estates, but by their own Catholic relations, claiming as the legitimate heirs of their families. They are perhaps more agitated than those whose titles depend on the strength of forfeitures. But there are many Catholic as well as Protestant families of Irish blood who tremble for the consequences of any explosion." Apprehensions of a similar kind were continually expressed in the journals which supported Government. In their very vagueness lay their capability of reproducing themselves. Sometimes the sober-minded and undiscerning public of Great Britain were assured that a renewal of the scenes of 1641, in Ireland, was at hand. Again, national jealousy was invoked by the imputation of designs on the part of the agitators of effecting a separation between the two countries.

To allay these fears, and remove apprehensions so unreal, it was proposed to send a deputation to England, towards the close of 1824. "We must try," said Mr. Sheil, "to convince the people of England that we are worthy of being incorporated in the great and free community of British citizenship, and that its value and durability would in nowise be diminished by being shared. Liberty is like light, and is not impaired by participation. The English people are a wise, a generous, a lofty-minded people; we should appeal to their wisdom, their justice, and their generosity. Our emancipation would be an act of thrift as well as of humanity; and it would be an act of economy as well as of honour to make us free. . . . . Things cannot stand as they are. Either a great national reconciliation must be effected, or hostility must be deepened; reciprocal antipathies must be strengthened—new force and activity must be communicated to the popular passions, and if the fountain of bitterness is not sealed, it must receive a fresh supply. Are we to be everlastingly arrayed and marshalled against each other by the infuriating provocations of the law?"*

As the agitation proceeded, it became necessary to

* Speech in Catholic Association; 31st December, 1824.

exercise continual vigilance over the words and phrases which, without deliberate purpose, were often used by less practised speakers, and by the sinister interpretation of which the whole organization might to some extent be compromised. It was not always prudent to rebuke gravely indiscretions of this kind. A jest, or a humorous reiteration of the questionable expression, with the view of effacing its original meaning, frequently did the work of the censor more effectually. On one occasion a gentleman named Adis made a rather seditious speech, at the end of which he offered to lay his head on the block for Catholic liberty. Sheil desired publicly to repudiate in some degree the dangerous sentiments of the new recruit, and with this view commented with playful sarcasm on the concluding phrase of the speaker:—"The honourable gentleman has just tendered us an oblation of his head; he has accompanied his offer with abundant evidence of the value of the sacrifice."

O'Connell was equally guarded at this period in the use of language that might afford a handle to those who did not conceal their determination, if opportunity were given them, to crush the association by striking down its leaders. Yet, with all his habitual caution, and his matchless dexterity in qualifying, with-

out seeming to weaken, the force of an expression which, when uttered, sounded upon his own watchful ear as too daring—he was himself sometimes hurried further than he had previously intended, and betrayed into expressions upon which, when riven from their context, Government was led to believe that a prosecution for sedition might be founded. When commenting on the career of Bolivar, whom he extolled as "the Catholic deliverer of a Catholic people," he became excited with the excitement his vivid portraiture of the South American Agitator had produced, and was unable to suppress the feelings of emulation with which he regarded that remarkable man. Criminal proceedings were forthwith instituted in the name of the Attorney-General; and whatever we may now think of the charge, there was sufficient reason—constituted as juries in Ireland then were—to entertain serious misgivings as to the result.

On the 1st of January, 1825, the grand jury, which was composed of persons of various political opinions, although the majority belonged to that most opposed to Mr. O'Connell, after many hours' deliberation, threw out the bills. Much exultation was manifested at the defeat of the prosecution, the consequence of which, had it succeeded, would have probably been to

deprive the agitation, at the moment when it seemed to be gathering strength, of its most energetic and influential spirit. It was felt, however, by many, that a wiser use might be made of victory than the indulgence of idle vauntings. The part borne by Mr. Plunket in the affair had been resented only while the event was doubtful. He was believed to have been throughout an unwilling instrument in the hands of others. There was no disposition on the part of O'Connell to glorify in the Attorney-General's defeat; and in moving a series of resolutions some days after in the association, Mr. Sheil endeavoured to recal the popular mind to the many eminent services Mr. Plunket had rendered to the cause, and the many he might still have it in his power to render.

"We lament that Mr. Plunket should have put his enemies to elect whether they would make a martyr of Mr. O'Connell or a victim of him. We do not forget the bonds of political cordiality which united Mr. Plunket to the Roman Catholic body. We feel as if we had snatched a poniard from the grasp of an antagonist, and beholding in his face the lineaments of an early friend, instead of turning back the dagger upon his bosom, we exclaim in the accents of mingled reproach and sorrow—'Is it thus that you requite us?' God forbid that we should indulge in the language of contumelious triumph at the failure of a measure which carries its retribution with itself. The weapon which was pointed at us with so deadly a level has burst in Mr. Plunket's hands: I hope it has not shattered them. But it is fitting that

we should abstain from every ungenerous vaunt. We are not drunk with a base and delirious joy. In our Political Saturnalia, we do not forget the ignominy of our condition. We do not raise our arms in the attitude of triumph, for our fetters are still upon us. But we owe it at the same time to the abstract dignity of truth to record our condemnation more of the measure than of the man. . . . . When Mr. Plunket read the words attributed to Mr. O'Connell, did he ask himself —What is the provocation given to this man? Who is he, and what am I? Who is His Majesty's Attorney-General, the Right Honourable William Conyngham Plunket? I know not whether he administered that personal interrogatory to himself; but if he did, this should have been the answer. 'I raised myself from a comparatively humble station by the force of my own talents to the first eminence in the state. In my profession I am without an equal. In Parliament I had once no superior. When out of office, I kindled the popular passion—I was fierce, violent, vituperative; at last I have won the object of my life; I am Attorney-General for Ireland; I possess great wealth, great power, great dignity, and great patronage. If I had been a Roman Catholic, instead of an enfranchised Presbyterian, what should I have been?' I can tell him. He would have carried 'up and down a discontented and repining spirit;' he would have felt like a man with large limbs who could not stand erect; his vast faculties would have been cribbed and cabined in; and how would he have borne his political humiliation? Would he have been tame and abject, servile and sycophantic? Look at him, and say, how would that lofty forehead have borne the brand of 'popery'? How would that high demeanour have worn the stoop of the slave? No, he would have been the chief demagogue, the most angry, tumultuous, and virulent tribune of the people—he would have superadded the honest gall of his own nature to the bitterness of political resentment—he would have given utterance to ardent feelings in burning words; and in all the force of passion, he would have gnawed the chain from which he could not break.

And is this the man who prosecutes for words? If the tables were turned; if Mr. O'Connell were Attorney-General, and Mr. Plunket were the great leader of the people; if Antony were Brutus, and Brutus Antony, how would the public mind have been inflamed; what exciting matter would have been flung amongst the people? What lava would have been poured forth! 'The very stones would rise in mutiny.' Would to Heaven, that not only Mr. Plunket, but every other Protestant that deplores our imprudence in the spirit of a fastidious patronage, would adopt the simple test of nature, and make our case his own, and he would confess that, if similarly situated, he would give vent to his emotions in phrases as exasperated, and participate in the feelings which agitate the great and disfranchised community to which it would be his misfortune to belong."*

* Speech in Catholic Association, 8th January, 1825.

CHAPTER VII.

1825.

Deputation to England—Archibald Hamilton Rowan—Mr. Peel and Mr. Brougham—Act suppressing association—The wings—Dinner at Mr. Brougham's—Meeting at Freemasons' Hall—Lord F. L. Gower's proposition regarding the payment of the Catholic clergy—Mr. Littleton's motion—Speech at Carlow—Duke of York's speech—Relief Bill thrown out.

THE condition of things which existed in Ireland at the beginning of 1825 was too anomalous to last. To all who possessed, even in a moderate degree, the gifts of political insight and discernment, it was clear that either too much or too little had already been conceded to the Catholic community. Too little had been yielded to satisfy, too much to allow the hope and ambition to sleep of one day being able to extort the rest. In the progress of population, the favoured

sect had not maintained their proportion. At the Revolution their numbers were estimated as being 300,000 out of 1,100,000.* Under the operation of the penal laws, their relative strength is supposed to have become much greater. But, after the relaxations of 1783 and 1793, the Catholic population multiplied more rapidly, and at the period in question it was said to amount to upwards of 6,000,000.

" 'The Philistines took Samson and put out his eyes, and bound him with fetters of brass, and he did grind in the prison. Howbeit the hair of Samson began to grow after he was shaven.' They put out the eyes of Ireland; they made education illicit, and declared knowledge to be contraband; they knew that slavery and ignorance were companions; they quenched the intellectual vision of the people; they bound them in penalties that cut into the mind, and corroded the heart; they set them to grind in the prison; they declared them to be incapable of honourable occupation; they fixed a brand upon their labour, and to their industry they attached disgrace;—and yet, in despite of all this, notwithstanding the detestable ingenuity of this infernal process for the demoralization and debasement of man, the innate

* Sir William Petty's Political Survey, chap. ii.

power of the country defeated the abominable scheme. Its original and native energy was insensibly restored; war, and massacre, and slavery, and exile had not stopped the progress of population. The law of nature was stronger than the law of the land. Shorn, as Ireland was, of her native strength, she imperceptibly regained her gigantic vigour. 'The hair of Samson began to grow upon his head.' What then was to be done with Samson? Unlike the strong man, Ireland had recovered her sight, with the renovation of her strength. . . . The Catholic now purchased the soil which he had once scarcely dared to tread; he had acquired power with the elective franchise; a career was thrown open to the intellect of the country in the professions. Popery had become rich, influential, active, restless, intelligent, and aspiring. They were more than six millions of British subjects. What was to be done with more than six millions of men? The State must either re-enact the penal code, or make them wholly free."*

In the speech from the throne, at the opening of the session of 1825, Parliament was called on to take measures for the repression of political associations in Ireland, which were declared to be "calculated, by

* Speech of Mr. Sheil in the Association, 13th January, 1825.

exciting alarm and by exasperating animosities, to endanger the peace of society and to retard the cause of national improvement." The aim of this denunciation was not disguised. Though the language was general, the specialty of the purpose was plain. Political agitation had become organic, and its regulated action throughout society everywhere began to be felt. Agrarian disturbances had almost disappeared; the King's speech recognised the fact, and ascribed it to the efficacy of the late coercive statutes. The Catholic Association congratulated the country on its tranquillity, and boasted that it was attributable to their advice and admonitions. Every week increased revenues flowed spontaneously into the popular exchequer; the revenues of his Majesty were indeed augmented likewise, and the industrial progress of the country contributed, no doubt, to both results. But the Government viewed with jealousy and alarm the growth of a power they were unable to control, amid commercial prosperity and agrarian peace. It was time to grapple with the danger, and to crush this formidable conspiracy, as it was called, against the established order of things.

Accordingly on the 10th of February, Mr. Goulburn, then Secretary for Ireland, introduced a bill,

professedly for the suppression of all political societies in that country united together by sectarian bonds, and holding meetings by adjournment for more than fourteen days. The Orange Society, as well as the Catholic Association, would come, it was said, within its contemplated provisions, and Ministers took credit for their impartiality therein. But the whole of this debate turned upon the alarm said to be entertained at the power and progress of the last-named body; and, under the advice of their friends in Opposition, the Catholic leaders resolved to petition that they should be heard in their defence at the Bar. It was likewise arranged that a bill for the removal of religious disabilities should be forthwith introduced, and to Sir Francis Burdett was confided the charge of the measure. A deputation, consisting of Mr. O'Connell, Mr. Sheil, Mr. O'Gorman, and other influential persons, was appointed by the association* to proceed to London for the purpose of communicating on the spot with those who espoused their cause, and supplying them with such information as might be requisite during the impending struggle. In a sketch, published some months afterwards in the "New Monthly Magazine," a graphic description of their journey, and

* Appointed 10th February, 1825.

of some of the incidents of their stay in the metropolis, was given by Mr. Sheil. Their first interview was with the honourable member for Westminster, who strongly urged the expediency of substituting the name of Mr. Plunket for his own on the back of the proposed Relief Bill. The offer, however, was declined. On the same day, 17th February, Mr. Brougham presented the petition to the House, which bore the signatures of the most influential persons who had taken part in the agitation, and he moved, in accordance with its prayer, that before the House proceeded further with the Government bill, the petitioners should be heard by counsel, or by witnesses, at the Bar. The members of the deputation, who were seated under the gallery, marked with anxiety the fluctuating features of a debate for whose unsuccessful issue they were in some degree indeed prepared, but from the tone of which they believed they might gather some indication of the feelings with which the House was likely to approach the subsequent discussions of their claims. They listened with satisfaction to the well-sustained course of argument and expostulation of Mr. Brougham, and did their best to look unmoved when made the subjects of no very measured denunciation in the speech of Mr. Peel. Mr. O'Con-

nell was the object of particular observation. "He affected a perfect callousness of manner, but it was easy to perceive that he was full of restlessness and inquietude under an icy surface. I saw the current eddying beneath."* The Home Secretary's reply was an elaborate philippic against organized agitation. He described with much particularity how committees of finance, grievances, and education had been appointed, and how their reports had been received and formally considered by the association, the order of whose proceedings seemed carefully framed with a view to suggest the idea of legislative powers and deliberations. If this system were permitted to proceed, the interval would be very short indeed between its assumption of such powers as these, and its being, to all effective purposes, a Parliament.

Mr. Peel introduced with great effect the name of Archibald Hamilton Rowan, a gentleman who had had the misfortune of being compromised in the political events of 1793, and who, having been permitted, after many years of exile, to return to his native country, had recently joined the association, and received the especial thanks of that body.

* The Catholic Deputation. New Monthly Magazine. Vol. xiii., p. 432.

Mr. Peel dwelt upon the fact that Catholic Emancipation was one of the principal objects for which Mr. Rowan had endeavoured to reorganize the Volunteers, and for which the society in question had been formed: the implication was obvious, and the House cheered. "He became heated with victory, and cheered as he was repeatedly by his partisans, he turned suddenly towards that part of the House where the deputies were seated, and looking triumphantly at Mr. O'Connell, with whom he forgot for a moment that he had been once involved in a personal quarrel, shook his hand in scornful exultation, and asked whether the House required any better evidence than the address of the association to 'an attainted traitor.' The phrase was well uttered, and the effect, as a piece of oratory, was great and powerful. But for the want of moral dignity, I should say that it was very finely executed. We hung down our heads for a moment," says Mr. Sheil, "and quailed under the consciousness of defeat. But it was only temporary. Mr. Brougham was supplied with various facts of great importance on the instant, and inflicted on Mr. Peel a terrible retribution, reproaching him with his want of nobleness in opening a wound which had been so long closed, and in turning the disasters of an honourable man into a

rhetorical resource." It appeared that Mr. Rowan,* who in 1794 had been found guilty of publishing a seditious libel, had in 1807 received the royal pardon —a pardon which, in the words of the Duke of Bedford, "no man better deserved, as no more honourable, more respectable, or more liberal man, existed in Ireland;"† that he had been received at court by Lord Whitworth as viceroy, and re-admitted to his place as grand juror in his county; that his conduct in every relation of life had been useful and exemplary, and that as a resident landlord he was beloved and respected by all who knew him. The want of generosity in attacking such a man for doing an act which confessedly violated no existing law, as well as the unconstitutional spirit implied in the revival at will and without notice of an odious charge, which the State had by its decree consigned to oblivion, afforded Mr. Brougham a great opportunity, and greatly he availed himself of it. The motion, however, was lost by 222 to 89, and on the 21st of February the second reading of Mr. Goulburn's bill was carried by a majority of 253 against 107. In the list of the minority are to be found the names of Mr. Tierney, Sir Francis

* New Monthly Magazine. Vol. xiii., p. 432.

† When Lord-Lieutenant in Ireland, in 1807.

Burdett, Mr. Lambton, Mr. Abercrombie, Sir John Newport, Mr. Spring Rice, and Lord Althorp.

In the Upper House the bill was carried by a large majority, the Duke of Sussex, Lord Lansdowne, Lord Grey, and Lord Holland vainly recording their votes against it.

Many of those who had supported the measure for the suppression of the Catholic Association, were anxious to prove the sincerity of their attachment to the cause of religious liberty, and the sincerity of their belief that that cause had been retarded rather than advanced by the invocation of popular passion. Mr. Canning and Mr. Plunket, Lord Palmerston and Mr. Lamb, declared that the fane of the Constitution was dishonoured so long as its gates were closed against millions of their fellow-subjects; but when those who were thus excluded stood without and loudly knocked, they feared to yield, or to seem to yield, to importunity, and rebuked with severity solicitations that sounded like threats. With such men, however, the obligation to act up to their own principles in the matter of concession was enhanced by the part they had just taken in the enactment of a new repressive law. When therefore Sir Francis Burdett moved for a committee of the whole House, to take into con-

sideration the laws affecting Roman Catholics, the motion was seconded by the Secretary of the Admiralty (Mr. Croker), and energetically supported by the Attorney-General for Ireland, and the ministerial leader, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs. There appeared on a division 247 in its favour, against it but 234. The smallness of this majority, whatever hopes there might be of its increase, when the bill should have been actually brought in, furnished a powerful argument to those who, in public as well as in private, urged upon the deputies from Ireland the prudence of coming to terms with their opponents. It is impossible indeed to look back at the state of things which then existed on both sides of the Channel, with anything approaching to a spirit of fairness or candour, and not to acknowledge the apparent hopelessness with which the claim of unconditional emancipation seemed beset. There was, however, much hesitation and considerable difference of opinion on the subject. Two propositions were made, each of which was to form the subject of a separate bill to be carried *pari passu* with the measure of relief,—the one making a legal provision for the Catholic clergy—the other abrogating the 40*s*. freehold franchise, and substituting in its stead that of 10*l*. To these conditions of the contem-

plated compromise, Mr. O'Connell,* Mr. Blake, Mr. Sheil, Archbishop Murray, and the Right Rev. Dr. Doyle respectively gave their consent. In his speech at the Association on the 16th March, after his return from England, Mr. Sheil stated the conditions which had been proposed "by some of their friends, and to which some of their adversaries too had expressed their willingness to accede,—namely, the raising the qualification of the 40*s.* freeholders, and enacting a provision for the Catholic clergy." He abstained from offering any opinion on the length to which it would be just and wise for them to yield in the way of compromise; but he believed that some concession might not be inadmissible on their part for the sake of securing religious equality, and he recommended calmness and deliberation in their consideration of the question. On all hands the proposal of a veto in the Crown on the nomination of their bishops had been, he said, abandoned. "They should enter into the proposed negotiation with Government, into this contract with the Legislature, for it was no other than a contract proposed to be made between the Legislature and the Catholics, with a disposition to

* See Mr. O'Connell's letter, in reply to Mr. Lawless, 16th March, 1825.

accommodate as far as the principle of accommodation was consistent with sentiments of honour. They should not betray a jealous distrust or a pitiful suspicion of injury, when he was confident that no wrong was intended." He proceeded to describe at some length the evidence he had given before the Select Committee regarding the payment of the clergy.

Meanwhile the members of the deputation were fêted at many noble mansions, and were received with kindness and consideration by most of the leading persons who at the time took a prominent part in Parliamentary opposition. In the article from which more than one quotation has been already made, there is an interesting account of a dinner given to them by Mr. Brougham. The party included the Dukes of Sussex, Norfolk, Devonshire, and Leinster. Mr. O'Connell, who was placed between the two latter, seemed conscious that he was observed, and said but little. There were besides many others of less note. Mr. Lambton "looked like a picture by Murillo, of a young Spanish Jesuit who had just completed his novitiate, hardly speaking himself, but seeming to watch Mr. O'Connell with unremitting vigilance;" and Mr. Scarlet, afterwards Lord Abinger, whose manner and expression seemed to

savour more of the veteran advocate than the generous politician or the genial man of the world, sat next to him. The conversation, as might have been expected, often flagged, and even the learned host, though affable and animated, seemed to make little effort to dazzle or amuse. Comparing his manner in hours of relaxation with that of other eminent men, what seemed most characteristic was the total carelessness and indifference to display. At Norfolk House, a few days afterwards, many of the same distinguished members of the Whig party were assembled at dinner to meet the deputation. "Lord Fitzwilliam was the person," says Mr. Sheil, "with whom I was most disposed to be pleased. It was impossible to look on this nobleman, of the olden stamp, without a feeling of affectionate admiration. His warm love of Ireland lives under the ashes of age, and requires to be but stirred to emit its former fire. Speak to him of Ireland, and through the dimness of his eyes a sudden illumination sheds forth. He reverted with a Nestorian pride to the period of his own government, and stated that he had preserved the addresses presented to him by the Catholics of Ireland, as the best memorials of his life; that he would live long enough to witness their emancipation seemed to be the wish nearest his

heart."* Lord Grey was also there: he was silent and reserved. There is something uncompromising and even stern in his aspect. He has a tone of "sadness which a placeman would interpret into discontent, but his expression is not atrabilious or morose."

During his stay in London, he spent many of his evenings in the society of men of letters, among whom his vivacity and *abandon* of manner rendered him a favourite. "Though full of humour," observes one who met him frequently, "there was nothing boisterous or vulgar in his mirth, and he carefully abstained from those personalities in which some of his countrymen were too apt to indulge. He was altogether free from religious bigotry, and pursued Emancipation rather as a civil right than as a religious question. There was a playful archness about him quite consistent with simplicity and shrewdness. He was intensely social at this period, loved the pleasures of the table, and enjoyed the vintages of France. The impression he made on me was, that he was a thoroughly amiable and good fellow; a little peevish occasionally in manner, but a man of sterling qualities and excellent heart."

* His wish was granted, and he had the pleasure of giving his vote in the majority by which the Relief Bill was carried in 1829.

A public meeting was held about this time at the Freemasons' Hall, the Duke of Norfolk presiding, for the purpose of enabling the delegates from Ireland publicly to expound their views. The greater portion of the meeting consisted of Catholics. Mr. Coke, of Norfolk, was the only member of the Lower House who was present, but many of the English Catholic gentry attended; and many persons were attracted by curiosity to hear the men of whom so much had recently been said. Mr. O'Connell's speech, which occupied upwards of three hours in delivery, was eminently successful, according to the account of it given by Mr. Sheil. His own he admits to have been a failure. By the time it had come to his turn to speak, many had left the room, and others were in the act of following their example. "He cast that sort of look about him witnessed in an actor when he surveys an empty house. The echo produced by the diminution of the crowd drowned his voice, which being naturally of a harsh quality requires great management, and in order to produce any oratorical impression must be kept under the control of art. He became disheartened, and lost command over his throat. He grew loud and indistinct. He also fell into the mistake of laying aside his

habitual cast of expression and of thought, and in place of endeavouring to excite the feelings of his auditory, wearied them with a laborious detail of uninteresting facts."* Such was the result of his first appearance in public before an English audience; and the disappointment, as he long afterwards remembered, was severe. How speedily his elastic spirit resumed its habitual gaiety and self-reliance is bespoken by the fact of his thus gratuitously recording details regarding himself of which the majority of those for whom he was writing would otherwise have never heard.

Select committees were appointed in both Houses to inquire into the state of Ireland, and the leading members of the deputation were summoned to give testimony before them. Part of Mr. Sheil's examination had relation to a statement he had made some time before, when addressing a public meeting in Dublin, regarding the treatment of a poor man, named Kuravan, who at the risk of his own life had saved those of eleven persons that must otherwise have perished, on a wreck upon the coast of Tramore. It happened that the case of this heroic fisherman had been mentioned by Mr. McDougal, a member of the Leinster bar, at dinner on circuit in the hearing of

* New Monthly Magazine. Vol. xiii., p. 438.

Mr. Sheil; and attracted not unnaturally his attention. It was stated by that gentleman that when presenting a memorial to Government for a pension in behalf of Kuravan, the question was put to him at the Castle, whether he was a Protestant? In commenting on the circumstance, Mr. Sheil attributed the tone of subordinates in administration to the jealous and exclusive principles maintained by their superiors in office. Ministers complained bitterly of this, and when interrogated as a witness, Mr. Sheil admitted that he had inferentially ascribed to the heads of the department what had literally been said by one of their clerks. When asked if he thought this justifiable, he replied that he conceived it was allowable as a "rhetorical artifice." Great odium was cast upon him at the time on account of this transaction, and in the public prints of the day he was represented as having been driven to admit before the committee that the whole story was a fable. On his return to Ireland, however, he took an early occasion to vindicate himself from this misrepresentation, and gave as his authority for the facts he had narrated the highly estimable person whose name has been already mentioned.*

* Speech in the Catholic Association, 16th March, 1825.

On the 18th of March, the Association met for the last time. The Hon. Colonel Butler presided, and many of the most influential members took part in the proceedings. £250 were received as further contributions to the Catholic rent; and a letter from Mr. O'Connell, who was still in London, was read, in which he defended the course pursued by the deputation, and recommended a prompt and unmurmuring submission to the new law, which already decreed their suppression. The letter breathed sanguine hopes of the approaching realization of their desires. A valedictory address to the people was then voted; and the Association adjourned *sine die.*

"I close my last words to the Catholic Association," wrote Mr. O'Connell, "with the strong hope that the spirit of conciliation which has sprung up in England will be met with a corresponding glow of discreet, but at the same time generous confidence; and that, flinging away idle fears and old jealousies, we shall evince a cordial and a lively disposition to make such an arrangement as shall be satisfactory to all parties, and which shall demonstrate our unaffected desire to consolidate the strength and increase the security of the empire."* So readily did the sanguine

* Letter read in Association, written from London, 16th March, 1825.

expectation thus expressed become general, that in the course of a few weeks every trace of the late political storm had disappeared, and there was hardly to be seen a curl upon the still heaving bosom of the popular wave. At one of the few public meetings held during the spring, Mr. Sheil dwelt impressively on "the profound tranquillity—the deep repose which even the anticipation of relief had produced; if the mere hope of justice had done so much, what would not the realization accomplish? The liberation of the Catholic would be achieved through the liberalization of the Protestant,"* and thus, to both infinite good was likely to ensue. He gave upon the same occasion a graphic and amusing account of the first impressions created in the minds of the deputation by their visit to England:—

"The recent delegation to England, of which I had the honour to form a part, had the effect of presenting in a just light, the comparative condition of the two countries, to the minds of those who were deputed upon a species of national embassy to Great Britain. The moment we entered England I could perceive a diminution of our sense of political importance; and in the sudden transition from the scenes of misery and sorrow to which we are habituated in Ireland, to the splendid spectacle of English wealth and civilization, the humiliating contrast between the two islands presses itself upon every ordinary observer. I do not know whether an occasional visit to England, and especially such a one as I am describing, has not a very salutary effect. It operates

* Speech at Carlow County meeting, 14th April, 1825.

as a sedative to the ardour of political passions, and should be presented as a part of the antiphlogistic regimen. A man is apt to be carried away by the popular feelings which he contributes to create; having heated the public mind into ardent emotion, he himself is under the influence of its intensity. An absence from the immediate scene of political agitation is not without its utility in restoring the mind of the most enthusiastic patriot to sedateness and soberness of thought. We became half English at Shrewsbury, and were completely Saxonized as we entered the murky magnificence of Warwickshire, that volcanic region where a thousand Etnas throw up their continual fires. The feeling which attended our progress through England was not a little increased by an approach to the smoky glories of its huge metropolis. We heard from afar the rolling of the tide—the murmurs of that sea of wealth to which we were advancing. London is not the mere capital of Great Britain—it is the seat of that dominion which holds the sea as its vassal, and before which India bows her dusky brow. We there beheld the central point of civilization—the mighty heart of that vast political frame whose power is almost without a parallel in the ancient, and wholly without a rival in the modern, world. In that immense and almost endless city—in its countless population—in its prodigious luxury—in its pomp and pride—in its glorious commerce which has gathered all the products of the earth within its compass, and united all that can minister to the wants, the pleasures, and the caprices of man—in the splendid circumstance that dazzles the mind, that delights the senses and kindles the imagination, we beheld the evidence and the results of that dominion which extends its influence over the earth, which, like one of its circles, passes round the globe, and which not only governs the present fortunes, but affects to an incalculable distance the remote destinies, of mankind. Why do I dwell upon these circumstances, and endeavour to present to you a picture of the greatness and glory of the British Empire? In order that I may impress upon you that feeling which pervades my mind,

and which is raised into strength and firmness of conviction—that the happiness of our country depends upon its junction, I should rather say its identity, with England."*

But it was not easy to drown in tones of national amity the tumultuary echoes of recent agitation. Great stress had been laid by the advocates of exclusion on the violence of the language used in the Association, and so deep was the exasperation of party and polemical feeling, that on the eve of the motion of which Sir Francis Burdett had given notice, many of the Parliamentary friends of the Catholics doubted whether it would be prudent to bring forward the question during that session. On the morning of the day which had been fixed on for the purpose, Sir Francis, accompanied by several eminent persons, attended a meeting of the deputies from Ireland, and informed them that it was considered extremely hazardous to bring on the motion. The delegates remonstrated, and pressed for a discussion. The champions of the cause in the Commons retired, promising that they would, in the course of the afternoon, meet and consult with other persons of weight and experience in Parliament, from whom they had

* Speech at Carlow, 14th April, 1825. Part of this Speech, embodied in an article in the New Monthly Magazine.

come, and then determine what was to be done. At this final deliberation the arguments of Mr. Tierney prevailed over the general misgivings, and discussion was resolved upon.*

On the 21st of April, the second reading of the Relief Bill, founded on Sir Francis Burdett's resolutions, was carried by a majority of 268 to 241. The hopes of the friends of emancipation beat high; but they were destined to be speedily dashed by the memorable interposition of one who, though his sentiments had always been known as hostile, had for some years seldom interfered prominently in political affairs. The Duke of York, then heir-presumptive to the throne, had been asked to present certain petitions to the House of Lords against the Catholic claims; and in doing so, on the 25th of April, he delivered a speech, in which, after alluding to his father's insurmountable repugnance to any further concession, he stated his belief, that the malady which had so long caused the late king's seclusion from the world, was attributable to the over anxiety he had suffered regarding this question. He then proceeded to state the construction which he put upon the terms of the Coronation Oath, from which he held it to be

* Speech, 22nd September, 1825, at separate meeting.

mpossible that the royal conscience could, under any circumstances, be absolved; and concluded in the too memorable declaration, that in whatever situation in life he might be placed he would adhere to the principles he had thus expressed,—"So help him God!"

The sensation which this declaration produced amongst men of all classes and opinions was profound. The exultation of Lord Eldon and his friends in the Government was hardly less than that of the partisans of ascendency throughout all parts of the kingdom. George IV. commented with some chagrin on the allusion in his brother's speech to the contingency of his decease, but in other respects saw no cause for blame.* The speech was printed in letters of gold, and became the Shibboleth of party and the watchword of Orangeism. On the other hand it excited, as it was calculated to do, the deepest feelings of bitterness and resentment among the Catholic body. Nor were these feelings confined exclusively to them. By the whole of the liberal party the language of the Duke of York was regarded as alike impolitic and unwarrantable. On the day after it had been uttered, Mr. Brougham brought the subject under the notice of

* Lord Eldon's Life, vol. ii, p. 547.

the House of Commons, and, though more than one attempt was made to stop him, by appeals to order, he persisted in stating the grounds on which he deemed such a declaration to be fraught with danger to the peace of society and the stability of the institutions of the country. After some angry altercation, the debate on the bill introduced by Mr. Littleton, for the abolition of the 40*s*. franchise, was then proceeded with. It was regarded solely in the light of one of those collateral measures by the help of which it had been supposed that a settlement of the Catholic question might have been effected: and accordingly we find amongst its opponents many of the highest Tories, mingled with some who, though emancipationists, felt themselves bound by their Reform principles to resist any curtailment of the elective franchise. Mr. Peel and Mr. Lambton were found, on this occasion, arrayed against Mr. Plunket and Sir Francis Burdett.

On a division, the second reading was carried by 233, to 185 against it. But the interest which would have otherwise attached to the measure soon died away, and though considered in committee, the bill never went to a third reading. The other auxiliary measure, that for the payment of the Roman Catholic

clergy, was introduced by Lord Francis Leveson Gower, on the 29th of the same month. The plan which he submitted to the House was intended to provide annual stipends of 1500*l.* a year for each of the four archbishops, 1000*l.* a year for each of the twenty-two bishops, 300*l.* a year for each of the three hundred deans, 200*l.* a year for one class of parish priests, 120*l.* for a second class, and 60*l.* for those who performed the duties of curates. The total amount of expenditure he estimated at 250,000*l.* per annum. Mr. Peel opposed the motion as uncalled for and unnecessary, but added that he would not object to the principle, if the Legislature had decided to remove all the civil disabilities complained of. The resolution, "That it is expedient that a provision should be made by law towards the maintenance of the Roman Catholic clergy exercising religious functions in Ireland," was carried by 205 to 162, but no ulterior proceedings were afterwards taken.

On the 17th of May, the second reading of the Relief Bill was lost in the House of Lords by a majority of 48, the numbers being 178 against 130. The Duke of Sussex was the only member of his family who supported the measure, the Dukes of York, Clarence, and Cumberland continuing in oppo-

sition to it. The fact was well calculated to make a deep impression on the minds of the Catholics, to drive the sanguine to desperation, and the timid to despair. On all hands it was felt that if at the general election, which must of necessity occur during the following year, some considerable change could not be effected in the relative strength of parties in the House of Commons, all expectation of any settlement of the question must be indefinitely deferred. It was felt by the popular leaders, and the feeling added bitterness to the disappointment they had suffered, that every concession made by them with a view to a compromise had been made in vain. They had allowed the association to be dissolved almost without an effort of popular remonstrance, in the hope that such an organization would no longer be required. The hope had proved illusory, and the powerful mechanism of agitation had been swept away. They had consented to the disfranchisement of the 40*s.* freeholders, yet to these very men they must now appeal, as the last constitutional resort, to efface the discomfiture which had been sustained. As might have been expected, there were many in Ireland ready to add by their reproaches to the mortification of the baffled chiefs of their party. Distrust

and disunion broke forth on all sides, and vague imputations of faithlessness were recklessly hurled at the more prominent members of the luckless deputation. It needed no ordinary spirit of energy and courage to look all this amount of popular disappointment and ill-humour in the face, and to undertake the work of reconstruction and reparation on the temporary ruin of the confidence hitherto reposed in them. It is probable, indeed, that without the signal force and versatility of Mr. O'Connell, the attempt would never have been made. But the influence of his example was contagious amongst all who had recently shared his counsel and its defeat: a common sentiment of wounded pride and tantalizing expectation animated all, and by none were these emotions more keenly shared than by the subject of the present memoirs.

CHAPTER VIII.

1825—1826.

New Catholic Association—Revival of agitation—Speech at the Boyne—Visit to Paris—L'Etoile—American sympathy—Lord Wellesley—Leinster provincial meeting—Prayer for Emancipation—Mr. G. R. Dawson—Manufacturing distress in England.

THE tidings of the loss of the Relief Bill reached Dublin at an early hour on the 20th May, and created a deep and painful sensation. On the 23rd, a preliminary meeting was held to consider what public steps should be taken in consequence of the defeat of the measure. Mr. Woulffe took the chair, and after some time spent in conference, resolutions to be submitted to an aggregate meeting were prepared by Mr. Sheil, Sir John Burke, Mr. Bric, and others. It was felt that time must be given to render the intended demonstration one of weight and influence commensurate with the occasion. But it was equally impor-

tant, in the opinion of Mr. Sheil, that no unnecessary delay should be permitted to occur. His counsel was that they should give prompt and firm response to the vote of the House of Lords. This answer could only be uttered by the nation as such. Their part was to advise and to direct its utterance; but the country at large, and as one man, must speak. Every parish ought upon the same day to petition Parliament and the throne. The idea was caught up eagerly. It was felt to be the discovery of a new electric chain, whose consequence none ventured to forecast, but whose potency and applicability was manifest to all.

The assembly, convened in pursuance of the resolutions above referred to, took place on the 8th June. In numbers, rank, and opulence, it was not unworthy the occasion. If unabated determination, and something more, had not been expressed with the sobriety of earnest men and the strength of intelligent and influential men, the faith in eventual success would have died in the hearts of the multitude, and the partisans of ascendency would have had cause to exult in the rejection of all terms of compromise. But this was not all. It was felt that defiance, not in impassioned words alone, but in deliberate acts, must be flung in the face of the

unconstitutional interdict which the heir presumptive to the throne had affected to lay on the attainment by peaceful means of religious liberty. The old organization had been extinguished by a new restrictive statute. It was to be considered how a substitute might be formed without infringing the law. A committee was named to consider and report how this might be done. Other expedients, however, might be resorted to, whose novelty would arrest attention, and whose practical meaning would be obvious to all. Of these, the two most notable were the taking of a sectarian census, and the holding, on a given day, of simultaneous meetings in every parish in Ireland. The one would exhibit the numbers of the disfranchised race; the other, their unanimity. To Mr. Sheil both are to be ascribed. In his speech at the meeting of the 8th June he suggested both of these measures, which he subsequently matured and guided to completion:—

"We are called again together by the calamities of Ireland. The sensations of deep pain, and, let me add, of profound resentment, which pervade the whole Roman Catholic community, of which this vast assembly is an image (and if we were not indignant we would not be men), derive an additional bitterness from the baffled hopes in which, for a moment of brief and bright illusion, we had been sufficiently credulous to indulge. How differently

did we meet at the last great convocation of our body, which was held while the bill for our relief was in its triumphant progress through the House of Commons! A spirit of enthusiastic hope was diffused amongst us—the mere expectation of success had generated results which more than anticipated many of the consequences of its attainment, when upon a sudden——but why should I attempt to describe it? You know it painfully well, and thank God that not only you, but that every nation in Europe, is acquainted with it! There were emissaries of confederated France and Russia in the avenues of the senate, upon the night of that disastrous decision, which may be repented only when it can no longer be repaired. Shall Ireland be reconciled? was the question. 'Never!' said the heir to the British empire. He did not say, 'not yet;' he said 'never!'—and that is a disastrous word from the son and brother of a king who stands upon the steps of the throne (he spoke, indeed, as if he had reached the seat of royalty itself), and from that high station he pronounced a malediction—an anathema—against the Irish people; he gave as a motto for Ireland that dreadful inscription which Dante has told us was written upon the gates of hell, and bade us 'hope no more.' . . . . The Catholic question has been thrown out by a majority of forty-eight in the House of Lords—forty-eight non-contents have produced six millions of malcontents. That we are malcontents they admit—that we are six millions they deny. What, then, is to be done? Let there be a census of the Catholics of Ireland. 'Do not dress your slaves with a peculiar garb,' said a Roman statesman, 'lest they should learn their own strength.' An enumeration of the Catholic people may be easily effected through the instrumentality of the Catholic clergy. The next project is one as simple as it is efficacious. Let petitions be presented from every parish in Ireland. . . . . Never shall we relinquish the pursuit of that glorious object to which the whole heart and soul of the country are devoted. We are willing to bind ourselves to the prosecution of this great cause by the most

solemn adjurations that can bind us to God or man, and if heaven is to be invoked by princes for our degradation, let us offer up a counter-invocation—let us bind ourselves to our country by a bond as holy as a prince's word, and swear that we shall at last be free by the dignity of human nature, so help us God!"

Another aggregate meeting was held on the 13th of July, to receive the report of the committee. It stated that while the committee were resolved "to obey a statute they could not respect," they were convinced that a new association might be formed, which would combine and consolidate the constitutional resources of the Catholic body, without in any degree infringing the act recently passed by the Legislature for the suppression of dangerous societies. That in order to avoid the possibility of its being alleged, even by means of any perverse interpretation of the Act of 6 George IV., cap. 4, that the new association can come within the provisions thereof, it was expressly declared that the New Catholic Association should not assume, or in any manner exercise, the power of acting for the purpose, or under the pretence of procuring, the redress of grievances in Church or State, or the alteration of any matters by law established, or for the purpose or under the pretence of carrying on, or assisting in, the prosecution or defence of causes civil and criminal.

That the New Catholic Association should not be composed of different divisions or *branches*, or of different parts, acting in any manner separate or distinct from each other, and that there should be no separate or district secretary or delegate, or other officer elected or appointed by, or authorized to act for, any particular part; neither should the New Catholic Association communicate or correspond with any other society, committee, or body of persons; neither should it, in any respect, act in any manner inconsistently with the said statute of 6 George IV., cap. 4.

The New Catholic Association should be formed merely for the purposes of public or private charity, and such other purposes as are not prohibited by the statute of 6 George IV., cap. 4. The first object of the association was declared to be the promotion of public peace and concord. The second, the encouragement of an enlightened and religious system of education founded on the basis of Christian charity and perfect fair dealing.

The third object was stated to be the distinctive enumeration of the people according to their various creeds; and the number of children of each sect receiving education.

The next purpose was the rendering aid in the erection of places of Catholic worship, and interment for the dead; the promotion of improvements in native agriculture and manufactures, and, finally, the diffusion of information calculated to advance the cause of religious toleration, and the support of a liberal press, were assigned as the aims of the new organization.

Petitions to Parliament were to be in future adopted at separate local meetings instead of emanating, as heretofore, from a central body.

The report was subscribed by Lords Gormanstown and Killeen, the Hons. G. Ffrench and T. Preston, Sir James Burke, O'Connor Don, Daniel O'Connell, Richard Sheil, J. J. Bagot, Nicholas Mahon, &c.

The conception and elaboration of this remarkable scheme were mainly attributable to O'Connell. In form and phrase nothing could be more sedulously observant of the restrictions lately imposed by law; yet everybody felt and understood that the old agitation, revivified and reanimated with more than its former spirit of daring and defiance, had found a way to glide through the bars within which it had been sentenced to confinement by the Legislature. O'Connell laughed at the law, and his laughter was

heard and answered at every Catholic fireside in the land. He protested, indeed, that in its most unreasonable provisions the "Algerine Act," as he called it, should remain uninfringed; but he would show its authors how thoroughly they might be baffled notwithstanding; and what excellent speeches on all kinds of exciting subjects might be made in successive distinct associations, each of which should be dissolved within fourteen days. No one could prove that they formed in reality but one continuous organization, that was a public secret; and with stentorian voice he bade the people keep it.

"The Catholic Association," said Mr. Sheil, "is dead. Can it be resuscitated? Not, perhaps, in all its former life, efficacy, and vigour, but its genius may be evoked, and its destroyers may be haunted by its spirit. The new machinery will work the vessel well. The association of the Catholics will be shown to arise from their dissociation from the State.

"On a specified day, let simultaneous meetings be held in every chapel in Ireland. Upon the same day 2500 meetings will be held; thus an enormous movement of the population will be produced. Hitherto the giant has raised but a single limb—henceforth the whole frame of the public mind shall

be put at once into motion. Briareus should arise and lift up his hundred arms together. If this great and appalling proof of the zeal, the energy, and the union of the people be given, if the minister beholds 7,000,000 of oppressed and impassioned men starting at once into the attitude of inflamed and vehement supplication, will he not whisper to himself that Ireland can no longer be trampled with impunity to the earth; that concession is no longer a matter of election; that while justice says you ought, necessity cries out you must?"*

One cannot help being struck with the variety of thought and language displayed in his numerous speeches at this period, although all of them were necessarily devoted to the iteration of the one great and importunate cry for justice. It was O'Connell's boast that he could repeat himself in popular assemblies daily throughout the year, without ceasing to command attention or to create effect. Sheil's fancy was more fertile, and his taste more fastidious. His ear was charmed with ringing phrases, and his imagination delighted in novelty. It was the fashion among his critics to say that his metaphors were often strained, and the illustrations for his argument far-

* Speech, 13th July, 1825.

fetched. But this gave him little concern. He knew much better than they did, wherein his power of fascination lay with a dream-loving and dramatic people. He remembered the advice of Chesterfield to a public speaker, and sought, if possible, on every occasion to give his audience something that would cling to their memories as they went home, like snatches of a melody heard for the first time. One or two instances of his versatility in this respect must suffice. After describing, on one occasion, the apathy in which the Catholic gentry had long been steeped, he proceeded to contrast therewith their awakened sense of dignity and duty in more recent days. "At length," he exclaimed, "they have learned to participate in the popular sentiment; the spirit by which the great body of the people is actuated has risen into the higher classes; and the fire which has so long lain in the lower region of society, has burst out at last from its frozen summits."*

At an assemblage of the friends of emancipation in his native county, on the 4th of August, which was at the time remarkable as being attended by the greater number of persons of property who usually served upon the grand jury, a curious instance was

* Speech at dinner at Wexford, 20th July, 1825.

afforded of his anxiety to strike the imagination of those whose active sympathy he desired to enlist in the cause. He thus abruptly began:—

"Niphon is the largest of the islands of Japan. Mosin is of inferior magnitude. If a traveller were to tell us (the case is an imaginary one, but I shall be indulged in putting it) that seven millions of the inhabitants of Mosin were deprived by the legislators of Niphon of the rights of citizens, because they believed in a religion more studded with mystery than the established creed of the larger island—if he told us that one-seventh of the population of Mosin who professed the idolatry by law established, enjoyed all the honours and emoluments of the State—that their bonzes possessed one million of acres—that they dwelt in palaces and rolled in gilded chariots—that they were supported with one-tenth of the produce of public labour—that their empty pagodas were built at the expense of those who rejected their worship—that the Japanese vestries excluded the infidel many from all share in the ecclesiastical taxation—that deep and indignant feelings were generated by this monopoly in the seven millions of Mosinites—that the heir to the empire of Japan had declared an implacable hostility to these degraded millions;—if he were besides to tell us that the cabinet of China, who were anxious to lower the pride of Japan, had turned their eyes to Mosin, and had calculated upon their co-operation in case a war should ensue—if he were to say that, notwithstanding the danger arising from the disaffection of the Mosinites, the legislators of Japan still obstinately persevered in their system of government, for the sake of the fat and unwieldy bonzes;—if, sir, a traveller were to tell us all this, should we not say that the government of Japan was exceedingly rash in offering outrage to so large a portion of its subjects, and that it must be composed of fatuitous and narrow-minded men? Shall that system, then, be wise in Ireland which in Mosin would be absurd? The strange infatuation which prevails over the councils of England will hereafter

excite astonishment, and posterity will wonder at the obdurate perseverance with which the legislators of England continued so long to influence the minds and administer provocation to the passions of millions of men. Mr. Canning had lately said that the foreign foes of Great Britain had fixed their hopes on Ireland. He would ask the simple but not seditious question—if 20,000 Frenchmen should land upon our shores, would the population of Ireland unite with the invaders? If Protestants think they would, if it be barely possible, if there be a risk of an event so terrible; is it not actual frenzy to keep the national mind in such a state of frightful susceptibility? The daily prayer which he would address to the minister was—lead us not into temptation."*

He concluded one of his most stirring efforts as a demagogue thus:—

"It is said the priests ought not to interfere in politics. Why? Do not the parsons meddle in politics? Do they not excite the prejudices of the English people? Does not Dr. Blomfield meddle in politics? He was once our friend, until finding that his head was not like Yorick's, and that a mitre might drop upon it, feeling the organ of episcopativeness in distinct and holy prominence, he betook himself to a more profitable course than the study of Greek tragedy, and set up as an orator against the Irish people. If then the parsons are the most furious opponents of our cause, why should not the priests approve themselves its most strenuous advocates? . . . . . They will not abuse the legitimate influence they possess, and assign it over to the rulers of the land. They will not convert the temple into a profane and sordid mart. . . . . They will not sink a shaft in Calvary, in order that they may dig for gold."

* Speech at Kilkenny, County Meeting, 4th August, 1825.

In entering on the new campaign of agitation which thus opened before them, those upon whom its chief responsibilities were to fall had all the advantages derivable from previous experience of the difficulties and hazards it involved; and what was equally important, the practical acquaintance with each others' capabilities and views which they had mutually acquired. At no period, perhaps, were the latter completely identical regarding many details and objects; but, considering how essentially different were the natures of the two men, and how little pains were taken by either to conceal their differences of opinion when they arose, it is curious and not uninstructive to observe how rarely these differences were suffered to mar the general unity of action, and how cordially each at all times acknowledged the value of the services rendered by the other. When Mr. O'Connell's health, along with his own, was given at a dinner to Lord Ebrington, Sir John Newport, and other liberal magistrates of Waterford,* Mr. Sheil returned thanks in a manner the most calculated to discourage ideas that any rivalry existed between them. Before acknowledging the compliment to himself, he paid the warmest tribute to the claims of his absent friend.

* 26th July, 1825.

"To him in a great measure is to be attributed the strong interest felt by the public in our cause. It is principally through his exertions that the energies of that cause have been kept alive. It is his mighty breath that has inflamed to intensity the furnace of public feeling. It is the great lamp that burns within him that has chiefly shed upon the public mind the light that now surrounds the question. In doing him honour you do him but justice."

His manner of personally acknowledging compliments of this kind was invariably the most brief. No man valued appreciation or recognition more; but no public man ever spoke less of himself. In returning thanks when his health was drank at a dinner in Dublin, he said—"You have done me a great honour, and I shall not depreciate it. The protestations of humility are in general little else than the coquetry of egotism."* He seldom in practice departed from this rule. Throughout his speeches there are probably fewer allusions to himself than in those of any of his cotemporaries. On another occasion, when much angry discussion had taken place as to the part which

* It was at this meeting Mr. Sheil returned thanks on behalf of Thomas Moore, in a speech full of poetical reminiscences and allusions.

different individuals had taken respecting "the Wings," he suddenly interposed with the sweeping exclamation, "I am sick—I cannot help the acknowledgment—I am sick of hearing men eternally expatiating upon themselves. The spirit of egotism predominates in our discussions. The personal pronoun, the most odious of all, returns for ever in my ear. I hear nothing but 'I'—from the speakers who latterly address themselves to the Irish people: our luminaries, to speak the truth, have a perpetual rotation upon themselves. Let us have done with all this."*

His continuous exertions at this period to reanimate the spirits of his party, entailed upon him no ordinary amount of labour. His distrust of extempore speaking had become almost insurmountable; and when within a limited space of time he undertook to address in succession a number of important assemblies upon the same subject, he was not content to repeat himself merely, but strove, and with success truly surprising, to vary not only the phrases but the topics of admonition and illustration. Far from affecting the power of improvisation, which he did not believe himself to possess, he would constantly

* Speech in Association, 23rd November, 1825.

stipulate for time to consider what he was to say before consenting to address any important meeting; and he wholly disdained the shallow coxcombry which tries to conceal the pains necessary for elaborate and verbal preparation. It was his habit to write beforehand what he meant to say. He would also, when too much excited to sleep, audibly rehearse the harangue which he was about to deliver the following day. During his autumnal tour of agitation a gentleman, who happened on one occasion to occupy a room adjoining his at a country inn, said to a mutual friend next morning, that "he had overheard Sheil oratorizing to the walls all night."

The new association met on the 20th August. He felt strongly that something new was requisite "to propel conviction through the public mind" of Great Britain. In their reiterated demand for redress, they must avoid monotony. The question might be kept in seeming motion without much positive gain: "it might be said to go round without advancing." The public ear, without being physically closed, was, he well knew, liable to become morally insensible to impressions from their very familiarity. "They must devise some measure that would make a great and permanent impression. Something must be done

at which men would start." The annual debate upon the question in Parliament was not enough. What then could be devised to arrest general attention? He proposed the formation of a register of the names and addresses of all the parish priests in Ireland, with a view to the census about to be begun. "Thus an individual intercourse with every parish priest would be established; they would thereby obtain a series of conductors, through which the feeling they were solicitous to circulate might be readily conveyed. From one extremity of the land to the other, a regular and uniform communication would be set on foot, and a great national agency would be established. This being once effected, the general census might be taken in a week; and, what was still more important, that population might be organized into supplication, and disciplined in what might be called the tactics of petitioning."*

His most striking effort of this busy year was made a few days later at a meeting of the freeholders of the county of Meath, assembled at Navan. On the banks of the river Boyne, Lords Darnley, Bective, and Dunsany, Sir Marcus Somerville, the Hon. Mr. Bligh, and many others of the Protestant proprietary

* Speech at New Association, 20th August, 1825.

were present; while the Catholics were headed by Lords Gormanstown and Killeen. The speech consists of a rapid and brilliant epitome of the annals of Catholic servitude and progressive emancipation.

"Upon the first day of July, in the year 1690, the waters of the river on whose banks you are assembled ran red with blood. Upon the banks of that river James and William met. The combat was long and doubtful. There was a moment when the Irish forces were upon the point of triumph. 'Spare my English subjects!' exclaimed the wretched Prince; and well might his followers cry out, 'Change kings, and we'll fight the battle over again!' The Irish were defeated, but not overthrown. The bloody day of Aughrim succeeded. The ball that pierced St. Ruth was lodged in the breast of Ireland. Notwithstanding these disasters the Irish power was not annihilated, and the walls of Limerick still afforded the means of a permanent defence. A large body of French and Irish troops were assembled within its gates; and William, who had been formerly driven from its walls, foresaw, that, if the expected succours should arrive from France, the civil war would, at all events, be protracted, and that eventually its fortune might be reversed. Under these circumstances, he instructed his officers to conclude a peace with as much speed as possible. Leland, who affects to discredit the 'Secret Proclamation' (as it was called), by which the Lords Justices tendered much more favourable terms than were subsequently granted, admits that William had directed Ginkle to terminate the war upon *any* conditions. It appears by a letter, written by the nephew of Lord Tyrconnell, that at one period William was willing to secure to the Catholics one-half of the churches, one-half of the offices, civil and military, and compensation for the forfeited estates. It was obviously a matter of great importance to that sagacious Prince to put an end to intestine divisions, at a time when England was engaged in continental warfare. As

long as Limerick held out it was in the power of France to create an alarming diversion. Terms were proposed to the Irish garrison. After some negotiation, in which Sir Theobald Butler, who had been Attorney-General to James the Second, took a leading part, it was stipulated that the Irish Catholics should be secured in the undisturbed possession of their property, in the exercise of their religion, and in the rights and privileges which they had enjoyed in the reign of Charles II. In the reign of that monarch Catholics sat in Parliament, and that right was reserved as fully and effectually as if it had been distinctly specified in the contract. On the 3rd of October, in the year 1691, the Articles of Capitulation were signed. Immediately after, and before the gates had been thrown open, intelligence arrived that the sails of a foreign fleet were seen off the coast. It may readily be conjectured with what an intense emotion the news was received. Offer to yourselves an image of the scene which the city must have presented. An amnesty is proclaimed; a few days are allowed to the Irish who preferred exile to ignominy, to embark for France. They continue during that interval in possession of the fortress, whose bastions remain unbattered. The green flag, with the harp woven in gold, yet floated from the citadel. The Irish soldiers stood upon the battlements, and looked, for the last time, upon the fields of their country, upon which so many of their sons, and of their brothers, were lying dead. In the midst of that melancholy scene, in the heavy damp that hung upon their hearts, a rumour is suddenly heard, that a French fleet has been seen off the coast; a courier arrives—the flag of France has been discerned. Another messenger appears, and proclaims the arrival of twenty ships of war, under the command of Chatelherault, laden with ammunition, and with arms and men. It would require some portion of the powers of the eminent person* who has been lately among us, and whose genius has found such admirable materials in the civil

* Sir Walter Scott.

wars of his own country, to describe the effect which that intelligence must have produced among those who had but the day before set their hands to the Articles of Capitulation. Would he not make us thrill in the delineation of such a scene? Would he not make our hearts leap within us in painting the effects of this great but unavailing event upon the chivalrous and gallant men who had not abandoned their Sovereign when he had deserted himself. With what a pathetic vividness would he paint the simultaneous impulse with which the weapon that hung loosely to the ground flew into the soldier's hand, as the drum beat along the ramparts, and sent forth its spirit-stirring call. How would he paint the rushing of men together—the earnest interrogation, the rapid utterance, the precipitous movement, the trembling and anxious lip, and vivid and flashing eye. Should we not behold the brave, the noble, the devoted, the self-immolating Sarsfield kindle with the intelligence, and starting into the warrior's attitude again. He did. The generous and gallant Sarsfield sprung up from the earth, on which he had thrown himself in despair, when the sound of France and of succour reached his ears. Every generous instinct of his nature must have been roused within him—his soul must have been at once in arms—his face must have been kindled with revenge and glory—every nerve must have been braced—every sinew must have been strung—his hand must have been placed upon that sword which had unplumed so many a helm. But it was glued to the scabbard. He could but grasp its hilt. The recollection of the treaty must have come upon him, and striking that brow which was furrowed with the casque, he must have exclaimed—'France, thou art come too late, and Ireland is lost for ever.' You must not chide me, my lord, for presenting this picture in these strong, and there are some who perhaps will deem them excessive colours. It is a theme to which it is impossible for any Catholic to revert without emotion, and I confess, for my own part, that I cannot contemplate the event to which I have referred without sympathising in the feelings of the men who were placed in a juncture so exciting,

and who had still power to resist the temptation which the event I have attempted to describe must have held out to their hearts. They did resist it. In despite of the allurement which the landing of a great force had presented, the Irish Catholics, with arms in their hands, with a strong city in their possession, and while William was engaged in a foreign war replete with embarrassment and peril, remained faithful to their compact, and, trusting to a false and perjured enemy, threw the gates open and surrendered. What part did the conquerors act? There is not in the records of mankind an example of more foul and abominable perfidy than the almost instantaneous violation of the Articles to which justice and honour had set their seals. Where was the first announcement of the detestable purpose made? Before the altar of Almighty God? Dopping, the Bishop of Meath (he ought to have been Archbishop of Dublin) preaching before the Justices in Christ Church, the Sunday after they had returned from the camp, insisted that faith ought not to be kept with Papists. He proclaimed treachery and sacrilege as a part of his sacerdotal ethics, and Parliament soon cried 'Amen!' The atrocities of the first penal law (for the monster was mature at its birth) are described by Sir Theobald Butler with the eloquence of a man whose soul was wrung within him, and who drew his feelings not from the sources of artificial emotion, but from the deep and troubled fountains of the heart. After having conjured the House of Commons in the name of every law, human and divine, not to infringe a treaty which had been rendered sacred by the most solemn obligations by which man can be bound on earth, or should be in awe of heaven—he that was not only the advocate of a whole people but his own, and was to be himself the victim of a parricidal law, proceeds to describe the consequences of allowing the Protestant son to tear his property from the Catholic father. And do you not, my lord, think his face must have been suffused with tears of anguish when he said, 'Is not this against the laws of God and man; against the rule of reason and justice, by which all men ought to be governed? Is

not this the surest way in the world to make children become undutiful, and to bring the grey head of the father to the grave with grief and tears? It would be hard from any man—but from a son, a child—the fruit of my body, whom I have nursed in my bosom, and tended more dearly than my own life, to become my plunderer, to rob me of my estate, and to take away my bread, is much more grievous than from any other, and enough to make the most flinty of hearts bleed to think on it. For God's sake, will you consider whether this is according to the golden rule, 'to do as you should be done unto,' and if not, you will not, nay, surely you cannot, without the most manifest injustice, take from us our birthrights, and invest them in others before our faces.' In such language did Sir Theobald Butler, who was a Catholic lawyer of the first eminence, and who had himself been a party to the treaty of Limerick, implore the Irish House of Commons to respect the law of man and of God! But it was in vain. The bill passed, and was succeeded by other enactments of the same character. Nothing was omitted that could be devised by the Satanic genius of penal legislation for the oppression and degradation of the people. Session after session new chains were forged until there was not a link left to which a fetter could be attached, and the very power of oppression had been exhausted by its accumulation."

He then enumerated the successive steps in the history of relaxation, from the first intimation given by the elder Pitt, in 1759, that France looked to the discontent of Ireland, to the message of Mr. Secretary Hobart, in 1793, which recommended the concession of the elective franchise, on the very day that war against the French Republic was declared; and, more recently, from the motion of

Mr. Fox, in 1805, in the Imperial Parliament, to the carrying of the Bill of Plenary Relief for the first time through the House of Commons in 1825. Save under the pressure of foreign difficulties or domestic troubles, nothing ever had been gained. There had been intervals of popular torpor, and more than one experiment in the efficacy of unmurmuring acquiescence; they had always ended in disappointment and humiliation. No other course was worth pursuing but that of incessant iteration of their claims, and indomitable energy in enforcing them as matter of right.

In the month of September he visited Paris, accompanied by some friends. During his stay he became acquainted with the Abbé Genoude, the proprietor of *L'Etoile*, afterwards published under the title of *La Gazette de France*. Curiosity had been attracted among French politicians regarding the growing agitation for the redress of Catholic grievances in Ireland; and the Abbé was much struck by the vivid and epigrammatic way in which his new acquaintance portrayed the condition of things as they then existed, and prefigured the effect upon the national policy to which it must lead ere long. "Could French readers only be made aware of all this

through the medium of *L'Etoile*, they could not fail to be deeply interested. Could not Mr. Sheil write in the French language as fluently as he could converse in it?" His early education rendered this a matter of little trouble; and an article descriptive of the past and present condition of Ireland was soon afterwards transmitted to the reverend editor for publication. The novelty of the subject as a topic of political discussion, and the striking manner in which it was treated, attracted attention. The Abbé was charmed, and the writer, perceiving that, through the medium thus unexpectedly presented, it might be possible to startle the intolerant immobility of men in high places on the other side of the Channel to the necessity of dealing betimes with the perilous question, undertook to contribute, whenever he found leisure from more pressing avocations, to the Paris journal. The articles which appeared during the following months at irregular intervals, were frequently copied into the London newspapers. This soon attracted the notice they were meant to provoke. The Government felt the sting of reproaches when translated from the French, which they had been accustomed to disregard when uttered in their own tongue. These articles, expressive of so much sympathy for the con-

dition of Ireland, social and sectarian, were made the theme of vehement attack in the *Courier*, at that time the recognised organ of the Liverpool cabinet. Their origin was imputed to the association, whose funds were said to have purchased their insertion in the French journal. Mr. Sheil took an opportunity of refuting these insinuations.* He was ready to pledge himself that the articles in question had never been in any way paid for or procured by the association. Satisfied with their success, he did not care to claim the authorship; nor was it till more than a year afterwards, when a question was raised regarding them which seemed to involve some degree of responsibility in the association, that he unwarily avowed what until then had remained a secret. How well founded were his reasons for such reserve, and how readily it was sought to take advantage of its abandonment, we shall presently see.

A new and powerful stimulus to popular hope began to be afforded by the manifestation of American sympathy. On the 14th October, 1825, a meeting was held at New York, over which Judge Swanton presided, for the purpose of expressing solicitude on behalf of Irish grievances, and readiness to contribute

* Speech at New Association, 19th November, 1825.

towards the efforts that were making to procure their redress. Resolutions were adopted, giving utterance to feelings of "sympathy for the oppressed, and indignation at the conduct of their oppressors." An address to the people of Ireland from the pen of the well-known Doctor M'Nevin, was likewise voted. Remonstrance and advice were freely mingled with words of encouragement in this appeal. "It appears to us, viewing the question at this distance, that a mass of energy and effort is expended upon Catholic emancipation disproportioned to its value to the Catholic, and that a pertinacity is evinced in withholding it disproportioned to the loss of monopoly it would cause to the Protestant. So great is that pertinacity, whether the result of fanaticism or of mischievous policy, that we apprehend it will never be overcome, until events shall place within your power the means of enforcing more important benefits for Ireland; and then it may unfortunately happen that by having so long drawn the views of the Irish people exclusively to this question, their attention may continue diverted, as it now is, from other measures of more vital interest. It will always be in the power of the Government to prolong this diversion made by the Catholic question, by always refusing it;

but the Catholics themselves may aid it to-morrow by wisely devoting their exertions and all the energies of soul and body to a more comprehensive measure of liberty, in concert with all their countrymen." The superior advantages of a federal system of government are then elaborately described; and the expediency is strongly urged of directing popular attention to the attainment of local institutions in Ireland similar to those existing in each of the United States. "Consistently with the Union, a plan of government might be formed for Ireland, which would exceedingly promote her welfare. Whether she shall continue to send members to that of Britain or not, and concur in composing a general Imperial Parliament, she must have a legislative body in Dublin, not only for freedom, prosperity, and good government, but even for that which touches England more, a durable connexion with herself."

With such a distribution of political power, all other questions would speedily receive a just solution. This language was more expressive of the sentiments and feelings of those amongst whom the long-exiled author, with so many others of his countrymen, had been forced to seek a home, than generally appreciable by those to whom it was addressed.

Considerable difference of opinion arose as to the terms in which it should be answered. By Mr. Sheil and others it was deemed unadvisable, if not unsafe, to seem to abandon the course they had hitherto pursued, and in which they were supported by a powerful party in Parliament and in the Cabinet itself, for one thus publicly suggested by citizens of a foreign state. Others eagerly espoused the opposite view, and words ran high. O'Connell interposed, and undertook to move a vote of thanks in a form which both parties might approve, while it avoided compromising either. This was one of those things in which his extraordinary tact and skill conspicuously shone. He made a speech to which no exception could be taken at the time, and which left every man free to put his own interpretation upon the reception of the address and the warm acknowledgment by the association of the sympathy it conveyed. None desired to check the enthusiasm called forth by the tidings that an association framed upon the model of that existing in Ireland had been formed in New York, and that means of collecting an auxiliary "rent" had been organised. Cautious reservations were made in the vote of thanks returned to the address, regarding topics which might have been supposed to involve a preference for repub-

lican institutions or disloyalty to the Crown. But while the sagacity of the leaders pointed out the necessity of thus warily acknowledging the aid so cordially proffered, they were far from being insensible to its value, or disposed to discourage the formation of a popular alliance so calculated to cheer the spirit of their followers, and to fill with misgivings the minds of their adversaries. Speeches full of gratitude and exultation were delivered on the occasion, and upon the other side of the Atlantic the ardour was not damped, of which the New York meeting had furnished the first manifestation. In many of the principal towns of the Union societies were formed, and pecuniary contributions made. The number of emigrants from Ireland had been steadily on the increase for many years, and of these a large proportion everywhere were Catholics. Sympathy for Ireland soon became an element of popularity in America, and persons occupying eminent stations both in the States and Federal Government publicly joined in its warm expression.

In the notes which Moore has left of one of his conversations with Sheil, he mentions that he himself had been of opinion that the best course the Catholics could have pursued, after their defeat of the previous

session, would have been to have given vent to their feelings at one great meeting, and after that to have observed a moody and menacing silence, which he imagined would have perplexed the Government more than the systematic resumption of what he is pleased to term "oratorical brawling." Sheil replied that "this would not do; there was but little public spirit in Ireland; they wanted continually lashing up; the priests were the only lever by which they could raise the people, and they had now brought them fully into play."* The change here alluded to had become more distinctly observable during the year 1825. Few of the Catholic clergy had previously taken any prominent part in the work of agitation. The question had been discussed in 1823 whether or not they should be entitled to vote as honorary members of the association, and they seldom appear in its proceedings of that or the following year as occupying a conspicuous place. Even yet a considerable diversity of sentiment prevailed amongst them, regarding the propriety of their active interference in politics. "The older priests," says Mr. Wyse, "were averse to all species of disturbance, and, with very indistinct views of civil rights, thought it an indecorous de-

Moore's Life. Vol. v., p. 32.

parture from their ecclesiastical character, their engaging, even remotely, in the tumult of a contested election. The young were of a very different temper; for the most part they had been educated at Maynooth, and had carried with them a spirit of independence and democracy."* It was to this spirit the political leaders felt that they must appeal, as that on which they must in the main rely.

At a public dinner, at Londonderry, on the 4th of January, Mr. G. R. Dawson, member for that city, indulged in a long and vehement attack upon Mr. Sheil. Alluding to this, in conversation with Moore, he said, "he would take his own time to answer him, and not be in a hurry, lest people should say he was angry. He traced the attack to his own phrase, 'plebeian arrogance,' applied to Peel; he felt on such occasions like the drummer tied to the halbert, having flogged so many himself."† This illustration seems to have lain in his memory, and was applied by him in debate when his most distinguished Parliamentary antagonist betrayed some involuntary signs of irritation under the application of his caustic raillery.

"Such is the interest which Mr. Dawson takes in a person

* Hist. Cath. Association. Vol. i., p. 280.
† Moore's Diary, 4th January, 1826.

whom he affects to regard as beneath his consideration, that he has made comments upon physical imperfections, and expatiated upon the inharmonious intonations of my voice. It is not the first time that I am under obligations of this nature to the family of which Mr. Dawson is a member, and of whose passions and antipathies he may be regarded as the representative. Mr. Peel, although a minister of state, thought it not unworthy of him to make allusions from his seat in Parliament to an individual of so little significance as myself. The sarcasms of the Secretary of State for the Home Department, were not, however, wholly unprovoked: for I had ventured to intimate that his language was bold, his reasoning disingenuous, his manner pragmatical, affected, and overweening; and that to his opinions more than to his talents he was indebted for his elevation. Mr. Peel retorted; he spoke of fustian, and I talked of calico. He touched on Covent Garden, and I referred to Manchester. He alluded to *Evadne*, and I glanced at spinning-jennies. He thus, as Mr. Dawson has expressed it, became my antagonist; and as if I were more than a match for the minister, he has thrown himself with a feeling of fraternal sympathy into the contest. I am inclined to surmise that Mr. Dawson was induced to take a part in the conflict, by a phrase which has, I fear, given offence in a quarter where certainly none was contemplated. I spoke of the 'plebeian arrogance of Mr. Peel.' The shaft appears to have stuck with a deadly tenacity. * * * *
Not satisfied with assailing the defects of my understanding, he has converted my tones into grave accusations, and brought an impeachment against my voice. I am free to acknowledge that I cannot retort the charge. Of his voice in public assemblies, I can form no judgment. I have, indeed, been occasionally present at his effusions in the House of Commons, but could never hear him. Whenever he spoke, the House was seized with an universal fit of coughing. His eloquence is down to zero, and is so chilly and frozen, that his auditors immediately catch cold."

Lord Wellesley's term of vice-regal honours drew

to a close, and many misgivings were entertained regarding the choice of his successor. His recent marriage with a Catholic lady, and the indisposition he was known to entertain to be made the instrument of enforcing a coercive policy against the new association had, to some extent, regained for him the personal good-will of numbers, by whom the earlier years of his administration had been hailed as the commencement of a new era. "They felt like captives, who have been long accustomed to harshness and severity, towards a gentle jailer, who, if he did not strike off, tried at least to lighten their chains, and at all events prevented that lugubrious turnkey, Mr. Goulburn, from loading them with new fetters."* No man was more solicitous of popularity; but this desire was often checked by another and rival emotion—that of sustaining his somewhat exalted conception of his own dignity. His love of pageantry is thus playfully portrayed in an account by Mr. Sheil of a "Dublin Tabinet Ball," given on the 11th May, 1826, under the auspices of Lady Wellesley, for the relief of the silk weavers, who at that time were suffering much distress.

"The victor of Tippoo Saib, and the conqueror of Captain

* Speech, 7th December, 1825; fourteen days' Meeting.

Rock, entered the rotunda. I am not quite sure that there is not a slight touch of melo-dramatic importance in his air and manner; and with a good deal of dignity, it occurred to me that there was something artificial and theatrical in his entrance upon a stage on which ephemeral majesty was to be performed. It was said by Voltaire of a real monarch, that no man could so well perform the part of a king. *Le Role de Roi* is a phrase which, amounting to a truism, loses its force, perhaps, when applied to a Lord-Lieutenant. Lord Wellesley seemed to me to personate his sovereign with too elaborate a fidelity to the part, and to forget that he was not in permanent possession of the character upon a stage which was under the direction of such capricious managers, and that he must speedily relinquish it to some other actor upon our provincial boards. He is unquestionably a man of very great abilities; a speaker of the first order; a statesman with wide and philosophic views, who does not bound his prospects by any artificial horizon. With these intrinsic and substantial claims to renown, it is strange that he should rely so much upon the gewgaw of a spurious Court for his importance, and be in love with the raree-show of vice-regal honours. A throne, surmounted with a gorgeous canopy of gold and scarlet, was placed at the extremity of the room for his reception; and to this seat of mock-regality he advanced with his vice-queen with a measured and stately step. When he had reached this place of dignity, his suite formed themselves into a hollow square, and excluded from any too familiar approach the crowd of spectators that thronged around. A sort of boundary was formed by the lines of aide-de-camps, train-bearers, and poursuivants of all kinds. I presumptuously advanced to the verge of this sacred limit, when I was checked by an urchin page of about ten years old, who, dressed in flaming scarlet, and with his epaulets drooping in woven gold to his heels, seemed to mock the consequence of his noble master, as with an imperious squall he enjoined me to keep back. I obeyed this Liliputian despot, and retired one or two paces, but stood at such a distance as enabled me to survey the hero and heroine of the

scene. The Marquis was dressed in a rich uniform, with a profusion of orders. He wore white pantaloons, with short boots lined with gold, and with tassels of the same material."*

On the form of local administration best suited to the wants and feelings of Ireland, his opinions were never, perhaps, thoroughly understood. In 1825, he had publicly given utterance to a hope that the day might not be distant when the Duke of Sussex should be appointed viceroy, as his brother had been in Hanover. So long as the office was to be maintained, he wished to see it filled by one whose liberality of sentiment and geniality of disposition would tend to win the attachment of the people to the administration of the law. But he was deeply impressed with the provincializing tendency of a vice-regal court. Its mimicry of imperial state suggested irresistibly to his mind associations of unreality and mockery. The assumption of royal formalities and royal airs, whether of condescension or hauteur, by the various lord-deputies whom he had seen play the coxcomb or the duller fool upon the Castle throne, filled him with a sense of his country's humiliation. Nor was this sentiment qualified by the perception that, in proportion as the person invested with chief authority in Ireland is

* The Tabinet Ball. New Monthly Mag. Vol. xvi., p. 548.

wrapped up in folds of official dignity, he is rendered inaccessible to opinion, and made liable to be unconsciously swayed by those who surround him.

Discussion of the Catholic question was considered inexpedient during the session of 1826. It was feared that, on the eve of a general election, some of those who had voted in the previous session might be deterred, by the fear of opposition at the hustings, from recording again what must be an unavailing opinion. Advice, founded on these considerations, had been in private offered by the leading friends of the Catholics in England to their chiefs in Ireland. Mr. O'Connell and others were unwilling that a whole year should be suffered to elapse without bringing the question under the notice of the Legislature. Great distress prevailed amongst the commercial and manufacturing classes in Great Britain; serious alarm had been created by disturbances in several places, having their origin in the want of food and employment; it was urged, therefore, by many, that a season of so much embarrassment ought not to be suffered to pass by unimproved, but that they should recal and act upon the maxim that England's exigency was Ireland's opportunity. This line of argument was easily perverted into an expression of

exultation at the misfortunes of the more powerful nation by the weaker. Mr. Sheil foresaw the evil which the imputation of such views must do the cause, and earnestly deprecated everything that might seem to give occasion for it. He considered the counsel tendered by their Parliamentary friends to be sound and wise. He pointed out vividly the damaging effect of an adverse division in a House of Commons, which had three times affirmed the principle of relief. It was better to wait for the new Parliament, and meantime devote all their energies to the strengthening the number of their advocates therein. He repudiated the idea of taking advantage of the embarrassment caused by industrial misfortune in the sister kingdom. So long as the people of England were prosperous, he had not shrunk from remonstrating freely with them on the injustice they permitted, if not approved. But he could not, in the hour of undeserved and unforeseen calamity, stand forth to taunt them, or even in appearance exult in their affliction. They had read of the dreadful evils then desolating England; they had heard of the starvation and sufferings of the unfortunate artisans at Manchester and Birmingham. When they perused these harrowing details, surely they could not indulge

in exultation; they could not wade through such accounts, and not feel for individual woe. He (Mr. Sheil) "by no means wished to be understood as if he accused his friend (the chairman)* of having indulged in such cold and heartless exultation; he was aware he took a distinction which might satisfy their friends, but which he might be certain their foes would not be candid enough to examine. Many of the people now most distressed in England were the very persons who in their prosperity had been the most disposed to advance their claims. Who amongst his hearers could forget the meeting held last summer at Manchester, when the honest operatives all declared in their favour? If he (Mr. Sheil) were in low and humble condition, and felt that he had been insulted and ill-treated by a wealthy neighbour, while that neighbour increased in prosperity and basked in the sun of fortune, he (Mr. Sheil) might be inclined to vent his feelings against him; but if he saw him, by a sudden reverse, bowed down to a level with himself —if he saw him working the earth—if he saw him covered with the shame of poverty—and the poet says there is nothing so shameful—then should he forget all his animosity, and forgive him his faults in com-

* The Hon. Gonville Ffrench.

passion for his calamities. So, when England was at the height of her prosperity, she might excite feelings of animosity in a generous breast, but the moment calamity desolated the land—and, after all, it was a great and glorious land—all these feelings should give place to a sympathy for her distress. Enmity would yield to compassion when the proud had been humbled—when the punishment had been inflicted, and the once haughty nation suffered beneath the shafts of adversity,—that 'tamer of the human breast'—that great instructor of nations, and best monitor of the minds of men."* He dwelt with emphasis on the imprudence of exposing the English Liberal members to the temptation of endeavouring "to save their seats by votes given in the spirit of a death-bed repentance:" and advised that, beyond the presentation of numerous petitions, no active steps should be taken.

This advice prevailed. Ungenerous and impolitic reproaches were no more heard, and the undivided energies of agitation were directed to making preparations for the impending electoral struggle.

* Speech, 6th May, 1826.

CHAPTER IX.

1826.

General election—Marquis of Waterford—Return of Mr. Villiers Stewart—Contest for Louth—The forty-shilling freeholders—Sir Balaam—Dinner to Lord Fitzwilliam—Case of Kieran *v.* Callan—Chief Justice Bushe—Health of the Duke of York—M. Duvergier d'Hauranne—Connaught provincial meeting.

At the general election of 1826, the seats occupied by Liberals required, in many instances, to be defended with peculiar care; but it was resolved not to stand merely on the defensive; and in addition, therefore, to the preparations necessary for the retention of these, it was proposed that an attempt should be made to wrest the representation of certain counties from the great landed proprietors, by whom they had long been held in mute and passive subjection. Of these the most notable was Waterford, for which a member of the family of Beresford had always been

returned, not only in consequence of their great possessions there, but of the influence carefully fostered from days long anterior to the Union, when the head of the house of Curraghmore was hardly inferior in power to the king's lieutenant. Lord George Beresford had sat for the county for several years, and, save by his votes on the one absorbing question of the day, he had seldom incurred any degree of unpopularity; but had it been otherwise, his seat would have been deemed equally secure. He was the brother and nominee of the Marquis of Waterford, whose hereditary sway all "shrewd men who knew the county" laughed contemptuously at the notion of subverting; nevertheless, it had for some time been determined that the attempt should be made, in the person of Mr. Villiers Stewart, a near relative of the Duke of Devonshire, and newly come into the possession of a great landed inheritance. To these advantages were added those of youth, attainments, and prepossessing manners. Still the odds were so unequal, that, after a protracted canvas, and notwithstanding the existence of great popular excitement, it was feared by many, including O'Connell himself, that territorial terrorism would, after all, prevail. Whatever might have been hoped

and prophesied in the enthusiasm of fervid appeals to the multitude, few, if any, ventured, in their cooler moments, to believe that a miracle would be wrought for their success; yet, without such a prodigy, success seemed impossible. Unless the great mass of the forty-shilling freeholders should, as one man, revolt, and, forgetting the purpose for which they had been created, and the abject serfhood in which they had hitherto lain, should simultaneously rise in insurrection against their lords,—the cause of civil and religious liberty must be once more vanquished, and that of Orange ascendency be established more firmly than before. It is idle to suppose, looking back upon the events that were about to occur, that all men of political insight and sagacity must have foreseen what was going to happen. Your men of prescient infallibility seldom do, on such occasions, know much about the matter. In a certain sense, it may even be averred that their blundering ineptitude is an essential condition of the great event happening at all. If party cunning could, with professional plummet or illicit line, fathom the depths of a people's heart in the hour previous to its convulsive agony, it may well be doubted whether many of the most memorable things that history records would

ever have more than half occurred or taken place with any eventful or abiding consequences whatsoever.

The oft-told tale of the revolt of the forty-shilling freeholders needs not any lengthened repetition here. Its first symptoms became unmistakeably evident on the eve of the Waterford election; and before that remarkable contest had proceeded for many hours, its triumph was complete. Mr. Villiers Stewart was returned by a large and decisive majority, and the prestige of provincial power which the house of Beresford had so long exercised passed away for ever. The Marquis of Waterford, who had been for some time in a declining state of health, never recovered from the effects of this political blow.

"He was unacquainted with the moral and political condition of the people. Surrounded with opulence and pomp, he knew nothing of their wants, and could not enter into the feelings of his dependents. The woods of Curraghmore, in which he was shrouded from the public eye, formed a screen through which he must have had a very faint glimmering and imperfect view of all that lay beyond the boundaries of his own demesne. He could not be brought to believe that the lower orders felt any interest in the Catholic question,—but at last he was disabused. His own domestics voted for his antagonist. He had a huntsman, whose name was Manton. This ruler of the kennel had been the companion of those rural and innocuous enjoyments to which the Marquis had been addicted in his youth. He was famous for the

echo which he used to call up among the hills of Curraghmore; and his Lordship seemed to be almost as much under the influence of Manton's horn as the beagles that were governed by his breath. The Marquis had lost the use of his limbs, and could hunt no longer; but he still liked to hear the baying of the hounds. The election came on, and the heart and soul of Lord Waterford were involved in the result. His whole household voted for Stewart. The Marquis bore it with some sort of resignation; but when he heard that Manton was going to support his political opponent, he turned in his bed and remained for some time silent. He then ordered him to be called before him. Manton entered the chamber of his dying master. Lord Waterford drew the curtain aside, while his hand already shook with the tremor of death. He looked at the poor huntsman, who stood with the butt of his whip in his mouth. Tears soon gathered upon the eyelids of the old man, as he saw his benefactor stretched in pain and sorrow, and thus reduced to that equality of affliction by which the great and the humble are placed upon a level. 'Manton,' said the dying Lord, 'have you, too, abandoned me?' 'God bless your Lordship, and long life to you' ('Alas!' said the Marquis); 'but, please your Lordship, I would go to the world's end to serve you, but I cannot vote against my country and my religion.'"*

A few days after, Lord Waterford left Curraghmore, never to return.

The example of Waterford proved contagious. To the surprise of all but a few energetic politicians of Louth, Mr. Alexander Dawson, a gentleman of small fortune, announced his intention of contesting the

* Speech of Mr. Sheil, at New Catholic Association, 19th August, 1826.

representation of that county. It was but three days before the election, and the threat was treated by those whom he was about to oppose with incredulity and scorn. For many generations, the families of Jocelyn and Foster had exercised an undisputed ascendency in all local affairs. Mr. Fortescue was the candidate put forward by the one, while Mr. Leslie Foster, nephew of the former Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, had long represented the other. At the outset their interests were supposed to be identical, for neither believed in the possibility of a general revolt of the forty-shilling freeholders, who, on all former occasions, had obediently polled in accordance with the desire of their landlords. But as the contest proceeded, and the resolution of the tenantry on nearly every estate to vote for Mr. Dawson became unmistakeable, a severance took place, the partizans of each candidate strove for him alone. At the close of the poll, Mr. Dawson was returned by a majority of 300 votes. Mr. Fortescue was thrown out, having 28 votes less than Mr. Foster.

Mr. Sheil acted as counsel for the popular candidate. His exertions were not confined to the assessor's room, but throughout the struggle, wherever advice or encouragement was needed, his animated features

were to be seen, and his inspiriting accents were heard. His own account of the exciting scenes does not do justice to the part which he personally bore throughout them. Its value, however, was not unobserved or forgotten; and the days were at hand when no longer for another but for himself he should be qualified by law, as he was entitled in every other respect, to claim the suffrages of the constituency of Louth. When the result of the contest had been officially declared, Mr. Sheil addressed the assembled thousands at some length. He wished to explain to the astonished and still half-doubting gentry, what had actually occurred. And why? It behoved them as rational men to ponder well what was the origin of "that most powerful and compulsive stimulant which had roused and impelled the lower orders into a resistance so utterly at variance with their individual interests." He stated that "two days before the election began no idea of a contest was entertained; and yet the moment a friend to Catholic Emancipation was proposed the whole tenantry of the county simultaneously revolted against their landlords, and in direct opposition to their wishes, gave their suffrages to the advocate of religious freedom." Then turning to the landlords, he depicted the danger and futility of

wholesale eviction. "You may make them martyrs, but you cannot make them slaves."

Yet upon the whole, the results of the general election were not encouraging. In Scotland, no alteration took place in the relative strength of parties; and the numerical gain achieved in Ireland was counterbalanced by losses sustained in England.* In vain were ingenious calculations made to show that these results were caused by a concurrence of casualties, and that in numerous instances mere accident had determined what political or religious influence could not have effected. The real causes of what it was impossible not to regard as a defeat—for when a popular cause fails to advance, it is fairly open to the charge of receding—lay in the reanimation of religious jealousy throughout Great Britain, and in the manner in which the influence of a disunited cabinet was used wherever Government influence prevailed. The Secretary of the Treasury, with whom on such occasions the whole management of elections and the virtual disposal of seats necessarily rests, is sure to belong to the stronger party in a divided administration. He professes, of course, to be absolutely impartial, and a vague notion seems at all times to have existed, that

* Ann. Reg. for 1826, p. 169.

as he is bound to take his instructions from the leader in the House of Commons, it is impossible that he should openly traverse the designs or thwart the views which the individual holding that eminent station may entertain. Practically, however, it is far otherwise—the leader of the House, unless he happens to be either the Prime Minister or the Home Secretary, cannot control the leanings of his active and supple subordinate. And even when these functions are so combined, it is impossible that amid the weighty and distracting cares of great office the minister should supervise the numberless details and arrangements, in each and all of which the chief whipper-in is enabled to exercise personal and political preferences. In 1826, the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Lushington, was known to be a thoroughgoing partizan of the party of resistance in the administration; and no directions from Mr. Canning availed to prevent the full weight of Government influence being silently but systematically thrown into the illiberal scale. The fact was matter of observation to those who stood close enough to see how the central mechanism of party was worked, although the full effect did not become generally discernible until the following year.*

* See Cotemporary Notes, by Sir R. Heron, p. 164.

During the autumn Mr. Sheil devoted himself with ceaseless energy to the task of procuring the appropriation of sufficient funds to mitigate the distress incurred by the forty-shilling freeholders who had voted at the late contested elections. From Waterford, Louth, Westmeath, Cavan, and Monaghan, the cry of suffering came loud and prolonged. The funds of the New Rent were wholly inadequate. He at once proposed that the reserved funds of the Old Rent, as it was called, should be made available. Some doubted the prudence of this expenditure: some questioned the competency of the meetings then holding to vote it. But his vehemence overleaped all objections. "Away with this political avarice," he exclaimed. "Shall it be said that we first denounced, that we afterwards excited, and then abandoned that class of our countrymen to whom Ireland owes such incalculable obligations? I for one fell into a mistake in their regard. I did not believe that there was so much virtue under rags. But they have proved that honesty and patriotism are not incompatible, and have afforded a most noble refutation of our political theories. We called upon them to liberate themselves from their inglorious dependence on their aristocratic masters. They have obeyed that call:

they have bidden defiance to their landlords, and shall we, with the means of succour in our hands, basely withhold it from them? Forbid it truth, forbid it justice, forbid it honour."* Again and again he returned to the subject.

"When the cries of the forty-shilling freeholders are in my ears, I cannot listen to any cold-hearted disquisitions upon the inexpediency of meeting at this particular season, nor do I require that the sun should be in any particular sign of the Zodiac, in order to perform an act of common humanity and justice. It is enough for me to know, that the high-minded peasants, who have bidden defiance to the 'tyrants of their fields,' are under the actual influence of calamity, to make me overlook every consideration of time and place—to dismiss all legal quibbles from my mind, and, if I may so say, to rush through every impediment to their relief. I cannot allow common humanity to be frustrated by forensic arguments, and obvious justice to be delayed by legal sophistications. I will not take up an Act of Parliament, in order to determine whether it is safe to be honourable, and whether humanity is made a misdemeanour by the law. I will not ask whether the application of the rent to the succour of the freeholders may be tortured into a violation of the statute, but I will inquire of my own heart whether it would not be utterly base and abominable to have excited the forty-shilling freeholders into a revolt against their superiors, and then leave the wretches whom we have wrought into acts of desperate patriotism to the compassion of the landlords and of the winds. These are my feelings, and I think that I may add, that there is not a man in the Catholic body who does not participate in them. The objections of some are grounded on the supposition that the persecution has ceased. This is certainly not the case. . . . . . .

* Speech, 19th August, 1826.

The hand of oppression is yet uplifted in Louth. We must paralyze it before it descends—we must fly to the succour of the people."*

One of the persons who were said to have treated with the greatest severity their contumacious tenantry, was the recent purchaser of a considerable estate in Cavan. He had in early life been well known as a republican; and was believed to have been one of the treasurers of the United Irishmen. He continued, however, to escape the consequences that befel the principal persons engaged in the events of 1798; and pursued successfully the business of a wholesale woollen merchant in Dublin. In his gradual uprise in the world he still cherished his old leaning to popular principles. But no sooner had he become a landed proprietor than he betrayed peculiar anxiety for the recognition of the class to which his riches, rather than his manners, entitled him to belong. Mr. Sheil avenged in public ridicule the private oppression his poorer countrymen endured. Under the character of Sir Balaam, he described the once unaffected trader as mortified at finding "his efforts at patrician elegance ineffectual. His gestures were in a state of continual rebellion against propriety, and

* Speech, 7th September, 1826.

his limbs were insurgents against grace. He found his former political addictions a terrible obstacle to his ambition." He then describes how he cunningly resolved to make a compromise between his vanity and his conscience, and to give his influence in Dublin to the cause of the people, while in the country he supported that of the aristocracy. He suggested, that if any of the great ladies of his acquaintance should get up a play, Sir Balaam should perform the part of Yusouf in the *Siege of Belgrade*, "who becomes Turk and Christian with a philosophic facility of transition." When he had come to the determination of abandoning his old principles, he exhibited all the enthusiasm of apostacy. He was peculiarly "genteel;" in other words, in harshness towards his miserable dependents he surpassed the more legitimate Orangemen of Cavan. "Bring up the cattle," was his familiar phrase at the hustings. "Pray, sir, what cattle?" said his agent. "The freeholders, to be sure!" replied Sir Balaam, astonished at his not knowing that he referred to the useful and industrious class to which he himself originally belonged. "The cattle," however, got restive, and Sir Balaam's reputation for gentility was much injured.

Mr. Sheil was now beginning to get into considerable

business at the bar. Not only upon his circuit had his aptitude for the varied details of Nisi Prius cases become known, but amongst the profession generally his legal abilities as an advocate were fully recognised. In the reports of the proceedings in the law courts of Dublin, his name at this period more frequently appears. He seems to have been engaged more particularly in cases involving charges of a personal nature brought by way of criminal information before the King's Bench, in several of which he was eminently successful. As a specimen of his manner when addressing juries, the following speech for the plaintiff, in Kieran *v.* Callan, may be given. After a few words of preface, he said:—

"I shall proceed at once to state the grounds upon which the present prosecution is founded. The defendant, Mr. John Callan, is the son of a gentleman who left a very considerable personal estate, to the enjoyment of which he was not, under his father's will, to become entitled until he should have attained the age of twenty-five years. Some time in the year 1824, he embarked in trade in the town of Ardee, in the county of Louth. He has a brother of whom you will hear a good deal in the course of this trial, whose name is Thomas. John Callan entered into copartnership with his brother, and their firm was known by the name of John and Thomas Callan, or John Callan and brother. Their speculations were not a little extensive. They were brewers, maltsters, millers, corn factors, and stage-coach proprietors. Mr. James Kieran, the prosecutor, was also engaged in trade in the same county, and had his establishment in Dundalk.

He is an eminent merchant in that town. This gentleman had a good deal of commercial intercourse with the house of John and Thomas Callan, and was in the habit of discounting their paper. About the month of February, 1825, Mr. John Callan, the traverser, intimated to Mr. James Kieran, that he was anxious to withdraw for a little while, from the dulness and vulgar monotony of Ardee, and by visiting Paris to relieve himself of the brewery and all the inglorious circumstances of fermentation. He proceeded to state, that in order to effectuate this object, and to make a proper figure at the *Palais Royal*, he should require some hundreds of pounds. 'You must accommodate me, my dear friend; I shall give you Chichester Fortescue's bill for 120*l.*, and you will advance me 600*l.* on my draft upon my brother Thomas.' Mr. Kieran was anxious to oblige him, and accordingly advanced him 720*l.*, of which 600*l.* was given on his own draft, which was to fall due on the 5th of May. Mr. John Callan sets off with Kieran's money in his pocket, and proceeds to the French metropolis. In the interval, his brother Thomas, with whom he carried on business as a copartner, passed various securities to Mr. James Kieran, which, in bills and endorsements, amounted to at least 1500*l.*, independently of the draft of his brother for 600*l.* A house with which Callan and Co. was intimately connected failed during the absence of the traverser, and, in consequence, the insolvency of Thomas Callan was anticipated. He, however, returned to England in 1825, and on the 26th of that month met Mr. Anthony Marmion in Liverpool."

After graphically detailing a conversation which there took place, in the course of which the first intimation was thrown out of the previously concealed intention of the defendant, and his subsequent repudiation of his liability on the ground that he was still a minor, the advocate continued:—

"Upon what grounds he intends to-day to assert his claims to reputation, I, for one, am at a loss to conceive. I have, indeed, heard that he intends to prove that he made some suggestion to Mr. Kieran to pay him 600*l*. He does not at all pretend that he does not owe him the money; on the contrary, he affects to say that after the action was brought, he wished to compromise for that sum. But, gentlemen of the jury, I now tell him in anticipation of such a defence, that after Mr. Kieran had been defeated in his civil action, while he acknowledged that the money was due to him, he boasted that he would never pay him a single shilling. If any witness is produced to show any such offer, carry in your mind the interrogatories which I here put in open Court. Will he pay even the 600*l*. which conveyed him to France? Will he do it now? Will he make at least this reparation for the enormous expense to which he has already put Mr. Kieran? Will he refund even thus much of the plunder? He makes no answer, but smiles at so ridiculous a proposition. Happy gentleman! If his own delinquencies afford him amusement, I congratulate him on the possession of an inexhaustible fund for mirth. But, gentlemen, I am glad that you should have the opportunity of forming your estimate of him, not only by the proofs which will be adduced, but by the actual ocular demonstration of what he is. Here he stands with 735*l*. of Kieran's money in his pocket (and that he received it, he will not with all his audacity deny), and in the presence of their lordships—in the sight of a jury of his fellow-citizens, and before the immense concourse by which this Court is crowded, refuses to pay a single farthing back. And this is a minor—this is an infant of tender years—this is the man who has scarcely passed the age of puberty, and emerged from the simplicity of boyhood. This is the gentleman who found so convenient a shelter in his amiable adolescence. O, for shame! for shame! What must we think of the stuff of which the heart of such a man is compounded? What are we to think of the man (for he is now a man) who would shield himself from such a demand under such a plea? What a

refutation do we find in him of the celebrated aphorism, '*Nemo repente fuit turpissimus?*' How well he has proved with what a rapidity a man may obtain the consummation of depravity, and become infectively bad. How short a period was necessary to give maturity to his nature! How speedily his propensities expanded into their full growth! In what a bloom of depravity—in what a rank luxuriance and perfect ripeness of delinquency do we behold him. The vices blossomed at once in the hot-bed of a rotten and corrupt heart. But I have done with him! I have discharged my duty in his regard—and it is for you to prove, that, although he may have escaped from the reach of the civil law, yet that there is not that lameness in justice which shall prevent her from overtaking this prosperous delinquent in her slow but sure pursuit, and I feel confident that you will illustrate, by your verdict, the truth of the celebrated maxim—

'Raro antecedentem scelestum,
Deseruit pede pœna claudo.'"

In the course of the autumn Mr. W. H. Curran spent some time on a visit to Chief Justice Bushe at his family place in Kilkenny. The conversation one day happening to turn on the writings of cotemporary poets, Bushe inquired "whether Sheil had ever written any poetry besides his tragedies?" and on being told that he had not, expressed his regret. "His mind," he observed, "is one of the richest in poetry and eloquence I ever knew. For the purpose of producing an effect upon a popular audience in Ireland, I consider him as standing in the very first rank. In England it might be considered (though

perhaps unjustly) that he attempted to impose upon his hearers by excess of ornament. He seems to me to have high powers for didactic poetry. The rich poetical invectives with which his speeches abound, if versified, would be fine satirical poems."

About this time a public dinner was given at Waterford to the venerable Earl Fitzwilliam, to whose brief vice-royalty in 1795 the popular party had always looked back with that species of romantic regret, that in the minds of the multitude is apt to encircle tantalizing interludes of hope in the dark and dreary annals of oppression. Had Lord Fitzwilliam been suffered to remain long enough in Ireland to execute the wise and benevolent designs with which he was entrusted, the calamities which soon after desolated the country would in all probability have been either wholly averted or greatly lessened in their extent and duration. We know how anxiously Mr. Burke lent all the force of his matured intellect to the considerations connected with this memorable though abortive mission of peace; and how sanguinely he looked forward to the good that was to ensue therefrom. But the colonial aristocracy, which from the time of the Revolution had farmed the royal prerogative in all its branches, was not to be

dispossessed of so profitable and princely a holding, by any mere act of resumption on the part of the Crown. The King's Lieutenant found himself treated as an intruder by the hereditary occupiers of every post of power; and before he had been many weeks in Ireland a cabal, headed by the house of Beresford, was busily at work for his overthrow. Its emissaries beset the King with political warnings and religious scruples; and ere Lord Fitzwilliam had time to develop the plans of amelioration of which the hand of Mr. Burke had traced the outline, and of which the sagacity of Mr. Pitt was engaged to fill up the details, George III. suddenly insisted that the Whig Viceroy should be recalled. Thirty years had since elapsed of national hopes deferred and national wrongs unredressed. Yet there seemed to be something of peculiar fitness, if not something of poetic justice, in the coincidence of Lord Fitzwilliam's visit in 1826 to the south of Ireland, while yet the shouts of popular triumph over the broken thraldom of the Beresfords had hardly died away.

It was during the same month that Mr. Sheil was invited to visit the county of Westmeath for the purpose of directing by his advice, and stimulating by his eloquence, the political organization of that county.

Wherever he went his presence was hailed with enthusiasm, and his exertions were generally successful. Unfortunately for himself he was betrayed into expressions on one occasion regarding the then heir-presumptive to the throne, which becoming the subject of party comment, were soon distorted and exaggerated, until they seemed to justify the most unqualified sentence of public reprobation. At a dinner at Mullingar, on the 14th of September, the chairman, Sir Richard Nagle, a young Catholic baronet, to the surprise of those assembled, gave, with complimentary preface, the health of "the Duke of York, and may he soon learn to entertain more favourable sentiments towards the Catholics of Ireland." Other toasts followed, Mr. Sheil's health was given, and amid considerable excitement he rose to return thanks. His words, as reported at the time, are as follows:—

"I thank you, gentlemen, for the manner in which you have drank my health, and will say no more respecting myself. I cannot, however, allow this opportunity to pass without making a few observations upon an incident which has taken place to-night, and which calls for some comment. The chairman has given the health of the Duke of York. He has so far deviated from the course which, since the memorable anathema of his Royal Highness, has been adopted at all liberal dinners in this country, the health of the Duke is drank in Cavan with 'nine times nine.'

A bishop has improved upon Horace's receipt for drinking—a poet in the paroxysm of convivial excitation is directed to take nine cups:

'Ternos ter cyathos attonitus petet.'

But anointed Beresford is indulged in still deeper potations, and episcopal loyalty is henceforth to be estimated by multiplying nine into itself;—I must be pardoned for observing, that it is better that we should altogether omit a toast which has become the signal of faction, and with which so many exasperating associations are connected. Yet I do not blame the chairman. He thought he was going through a mere unmeaning formula. Once, indeed, the health of the Duke of York passed like any other routine enunciation of an attachment to the reigning family; but his Royal Highness has recently contrived to attach recollections to his name which make the gorge of every genuine Irishman rise at its utterance. The chairman, however, has annexed to his health an amiable expression of his hopes that his Royal Highness may live to cherish more favourable sentiments towards one-third of the population of the British empire. Considering the character of his royal mind, it would require more time than is in all likelihood reserved to him to alter his opinions. Obstinacy is not unfrequently allied with faculties of that order which belongs to his Royal Highness. It would, at all events, take a year or so to produce this revolution in the heart and understanding of the Hero of Dunkirk; and, judging from the attendance of Sir Henry Halford upon his Royal Highness to Brighton in the same carriage, and other incidents of the like consolatory nature, it is to be apprehended that the effect of Digitalis will not prove so sovereign as to give his Royal Highness sufficient time to correct his antipathy to Ireland. In case, at any assembly of Roman Catholics, his Royal Highness' health shall be hereafter proposed, instead of intimating a desire that his Royal Highness should change his opinions, I should beg leave, with profound submission, to suggest that the means should be substituted for the end, and in order that he may have an opportunity of modifying his opinions, that the

chairman should propose 'Success to Foxglove.' But one word more. In the course of the evening, 'tis not improbable that we shall have got into a more pathetic mood; memories may be given, and if we should fall into any train of melancholy reminiscences, to preserve some kind of consistence in our loyal effusions, I shall venture to propose the memory of Mrs. Clarke."

Great indignation was expressed in various quarters when the report of this speech appeared, and by his best friends it was condemned most strongly, as calculated to injure not only himself but the popular cause. In private he confessed that it had been "spoken under the influence of some wine," and he could not easily be persuaded that it had provoked in high quarters sentiments of serious resentment. When forced to alter this opinion, he endeavoured in an elaborate public statement, to qualify the terms originally used, and to vindicate himself from the imputation of wantonness or malignity. But it must be owned that this did not serve to mend matters. The levity with which he tried to invest the subject was censured as ill-timed, considering the Duke of York's declining state; and as he neither retracted nor repudiated the offensive phrases originally used, what was meant as an extenuation was received and resented as an aggravation of the first offence.

But if he feared not to jest at the expense of the

highest personages in the realm when ranged in antagonism to the rights of his creed, as little did he hesitate to visit with the lash of bitter irony those, whether lay or clerical, whom he believed to be swayed by unworthy motives in deserting the path of public duty. Within a few days of the attack upon the Duke of York, he held up to unsparing ridicule in the Association two priests of Westmeath, whom he had found, during his late sojourn in that county, arrayed in hostility to their brethren and their flocks, owing, it was supposed, to the influence which favours conferred by certain of the landed proprietary exercised over their minds. Alluding to the refusal of one of these to vote for the popular candidate at the recent election, when a single vote might have turned the scale, he said " This gentleman was formerly a candidate for a bishopric, and whenever our clergy shall be paid by the Crown, and the mitre is to be fastened with a golden band, there is no person whose forehead it will better become. Far be it from me to insinuate that this disinterested functionary of religion is swayed by any base or sordid motive. I will not charge him with a grovelling solicitude to hold a place at the side table of Sir Thomas Chapman. I am, on the contrary, disposed

to think that his eyes are so intently fixed upon objects before which this world vanishes into insignificance, that if he did not interfere in the election, it arose from a truly Christian insensibility to all sublunary concerns. It so happens, however, that from the heights of spirituality which he has ascended, if he should chance occasionally to look down upon the earth, he beholds in that part of it which is called the county of Westmeath a couple of hundred acres of good fat land, of which he holds a lease under Sir Thomas Chapman. Alas! for him, he is encumbered with many of those impediments to salvation which, we are told in the Scriptures, impede the progress of a rich man to heaven. He is one of those pastors who has made good use of his shears. For my part, if I were one of his parishioners, I should endeavour to diminish his temptations, and avoid any increase of those burthens which may prevent 'the camel from passing through the needle's eye.'"*

About this time, the Duc de Montebello, accompanied by MM. Duvergier d'Hauranne and Thayer, visited Ireland; and in a work subsequently published an interesting account was given of the impressions

* Speech, 23d September, 1826.

made upon their minds by the strange and anomalous condition of things they had beheld. They were present at the provincial meeting for Connaught, held at Ballinasloe, the account of which, as given by M. Duvergier, is eminently piquant and picturesque. While one of the speakers was inveighing against the bad faith of the Government in past times towards the Catholics, and the infatuation of driving them to look to the revolt of America as an example, a loud and prolonged cheer burst forth suddenly from every quarter, which shook the edifice to its roof. It was the unlooked-for appearance of Mr. Sheil on the platform that had produced this startling effect.

"Were I commissioned," writes M. Duvergier, "to take down the *signalement* of Mr. Sheil, this would be very nearly the result: five feet four; eyes quick and piercing; complexion pale; chin pointed; hair dark; and in adding, mouth middle-sized, I flatter myself I should have given a description not to be excelled in exactness at the *bureau des passeports*. But this is the portrait of the *gentleman;* that of the *orator* is widely diverse. When you behold that little Gascon figure in repose, it is impossible to suspect to what changes passion is capable of con-

verting it. There is in Sheil something of Juvenal, of Pindar, and of Mirabeau. His satire is shrewd and biting; his poetry dazzles; his enthusiasm carries you away. When he flings forth his sarcasm, a bitter smile contracts his lips; when he threatens, his eyes dart forth lightnings; when he is under the dominion of powerful inspiration, they take an expression altogether sublime. His voice is meagre, harsh, and shrill; but a profound emotion seems to regulate its vibrations. His gesture is quick, abrupt, and rather disorderly; but it is always in perfect accord with such sentiments as he has to express. Sheil possesses in an eminent degree the surprising faculty of exciting himself to the very verge of delirium without once losing his complete self-possession. I was at his side whilst speaking; and more than once I saw all his limbs tremble; a moment after he resumed the discussion with not less composure than ingenuity. Like the English, whom in other particulars he so little resembles, Sheil is too fond of quotations. Certain passages in bad taste, it may also be observed, occasionally disfigure the best of his speeches; and in general it has been remarked, that in both elocution and diction, there is something too much of the theatre

about him. These reproaches have some appearance of being well-founded, as more than once indeed I imagined I had the figure of Kean actually before me, but then I must also add, that Kean is a very admirable actor. In a word, I was seduced, I was dazzled, and together with me, the whole assembly. During an entire hour one single soul, that of the orator, seemed to animate this living mass; and from time to time you would have said that an electric shock completely convulsed them. I never before assisted at so absolute a triumph."* After giving some striking instances of the great disparity of numbers between the conflicting creeds in different parts of the kingdom, Mr. Sheil proceeded :—

"In what light must any impartial Englishman, or any foreigner by whom this country may chance to be visited, regard a constitution which excludes the enormous majority of its citizens from a participation in its privileges? If—but I should not put it in by way of hypothesis, for a French nobleman of the highest rank is present in this assembly; he is accompanied by three of his countrymen, of whom two informed me, at the moment I was about to rise, that they are French Protestants, and that they consider the exclusion of the Catholics of Ireland from the full advantage of British citizenship, a reproach to the religion of the State. They told me that the whole body of French Protestants

* Lettres sur les Elections Anglaises, et sur la Situation de l'Irlande, pp. 157–9. Paris, 1827.

sympathize with us, and are astonished that the professors of reformed Christianity should deny to Catholics that perfect freedom of opinion on which their own system of belief is founded. They further mentioned to me, that Monsieur de Jaucourt and Monsieur de Portale, two members of the French government, who fill important situations in the ministry, are Protestants—and Protestants are not only legally admissible, but are actually admitted to influential offices in the State. What, then, must be the astonishment of Frenchmen, on visiting this country, to find seven millions of its inhabitants cast beyond the pale of the constitution on account of their conscientious adherence to the national faith? The Duc de Montebello will return in a little time to France, and I have pictured to myself what he will say, when his compatriots shall inquire of him what he has seen, and heard, and felt amongst us. 'I visited,' he will, or might at least say, 'that most important portion of the British dominions for which in France much interest is felt, but of which all is not known. I arrived in a country endowed by nature with its best gifts, and crowded with a population of vigorous, healthy, intelligent, and generously-minded men. Yet, with all these advantages, I found an utter counteraction of the apparent designs of Providence; and where I expected a scene of national prosperity, I beheld a most miserable and degrading spectacle. The law had established an aristocracy different from that which exists in any other country, and which is not derived from rank, or birth, or public virtue, but consists in the profession of a peculiar form of religion. The fiercest dissensions are thus nurtured by the law, and two factions are marshalled, which are halloed on by the Government, and infuriated into a detestation of each other.' And when he shall have said this, and much more than this, and shall have gone into all the details of contumely to which every man of us is subject—when he shall have exhibited all the multifarious varieties of degradation, and of injury, which result from this abominable system, will not some Frenchman exclaim: 'And how do these seven millions bear with all this?—are they contented with their political infamy?—do they bend in meekness

to the yoke?—do they prostrate themselves before their masters? —are they satisfied with this state of things?—are they so utterly base as to hug their shame, and to be fond of their degradation?" Oh, my countrymen, what answer should be given to these questions? Shall Frenchmen be told that our hearts are compounded of such base stuff? Shall it be said, by our illustrious friend, that we have reached such a meanness of spirit, and have attained such an utter corruption and helotism of feeling, as to be contented with such a lot? Thank God, he will not say so; he will speak far differently about us. He will say, that seven millions of oppressed and degraded men feel all that burning indignation that befits the complication of insult and of injury which they endure; and that they are animated by as resolved and enthusiastic a spirit as ever actuated a people in the cause of freedom. He will say that they are bound together by a single, an undivided, and inseparable sentiment; that they are as firm and as determined as they are ardent and inflamed; that every thought and feeling is fixed and concentrated in an impassioned aspiration for the liberty of their country. Let him say this, and more than this; let him add, that if ever it shall come to pass that, to the financial embarrassments of England there should be superadded the enormous expenditure of war, and if—with her machinery and manufactures at a stand—with her enormous debt, hanging like an avalanche above her head—with famine within and danger abroad—the fleets of France and of America shall unfurl their flags upon the seas, then—in that hour of tremendous peril, with an enormous population, whose bare physical power would be terrific if put into a simultaneous and gigantic action, and would be doubly terrible if there were art and skill to give it direction, order, system, and effect—then ——— I have made a pause, and I feel, from the silence with which you await my words, that there is something of awe in your anticipation—then ——— But I shall proceed no further. This is a subject on which much may be said, and more ought to be thought, and I shall only add—may God Almighty give that wisdom to those who are appointed by His providence to sway

the destinies of empires, which shall avert those dreadful events whose bare possibility is sufficient to appal, and from whose likelihood every good man must recoil in horror. And yet, why throw a veil upon futurity—why shut out from contemplation what may arrive hereafter, because I may be calumniously reproached with desiring what I do but apprehend, and of endeavouring to realize what it is even dreadful to imagine? I do, in the face of heaven, solemnly protest, that I not only deprecate the political calamities to which I have adverted, but I look upon them with horror. Not only my duty as a subject, but my feelings as a man, and those instincts of humanity of which, I trust, that I am not destitute, teach me to regard any political convulsion which may take place in this country with a sentiment still stronger than dismay. If it should unfortunately happen that such events should take place in the course of a few years, the men who, like myself, take the most active share in public affairs, would be the first to perish. They would be swept away in the torrent of blood by which the country would be deluged. But is it wise, because the contemplation of an event is attended with terrible anticipations, to clasp our hands to our eyes, and shut it out! Are dangers to be averted by being disguised?—or does he who cries 'breakers a-head' drive the vessel on the rock? I hear the roaring of the billows, and see in the distance the surf breaking over the reef, and shall I not exclaim, 'helm a lee!' It is to prevent, and not to hurry destruction on, that I point out the peril on which we are advancing, and drive to ruin before the wind. I shall, then, fearlessly state what I apprehend may be the consequence of withholding their rights from seven millions of the Irish people. It will be observed, that I am not speaking of events which may take place in one, two, three, or perhaps twenty years—but any man who is not actuated by sentiments of the basest selfishness, will be as solicitous to protect his children from the evils incidental to national calamity, as to shelter himself against them—should those claims, which are prosecuted with such an ardent pertinacity, be constantly rejected, it is to be apprehended that the sense of their political duty may be ulti-

mately so far weakened and impaired, that their state of exasperation, to use the language of Mr. Canning, may afford to the enemies of England an opportunity of assailing the empire in a very vulnerable point. The Secretary for Foreign Affairs has intimated this probability, and stated that the attention of the Continental powers was fixed upon this country. I, therefore, do no more than amplify and expand the sentiment of the minister—no more than he considered it consistent with official delicacy to do. Should the anticipation of Mr. Canning come to pass, what sort of spectacle would this country present? I do verily believe that every man, who had any sort of stake in the country—every respectable Roman Catholic, would be induced to sacrifice his wrongs and his antipathies to his sense of moral and religious duty, and would adhere to his vow of allegiance. But the great body of the people would, I fear, be under the influence of very powerful temptation, and adventurers and men of desperate fortunes and aspiring minds (and they are to be found in every country) might yield to the suggestions of a wild and criminal ambition, and give a loose to their passions. In my judgment, such an enterprise would ultimately fail, because the power of England, unless she sustained very great reverses, would prevent rebellion from being ever sanctified by its result. But supposing that the event would be what every good subject and good Christian should legally and piously desire, still through what dreadful scenes the country would have to pass before that salutary consummation could be attained. I do not deny that many would derive, from the confiscation of Catholic property, some consolatory compensations for the national misfortunes. But must not every man of ordinary feeling and humanity, no matter to what party he may belong, shudder at the thought of all the misery, both public and domestic, with which such a state of things would be attended?"

A complimentary vote having been passed to the distinguished strangers who were present,

The Duke de Montebello, in returning thanks, expressed the sympathy which the liberal party in France entertained for the political disinheritance of the majority of the Irish people. "They had not enjoyed liberty long enough in France to have forgotten the time when they were struggling for it, but they had struggled and they had gained it at last. Civil and religious liberty had been there achieved by that glorious revolution which had been so little understood and so much abused by those who had only looked at its excesses; and those rights were so deeply impressed on their hearts, that if the Protestant faith were injured, they would rise with as much indignation at a Catholic as his hearers did at a Protestant ascendency."

Nor were these professions groundless. After the Restoration, many attempts were made by the Ultra-Royalist party to re-introduce in legislation the exclusive and intolerant spirit which, under the Republic and the Empire, was believed to have been extinguished for ever. The wise and just disposition of Louis XVIII. led him to resist every suggestion of the kind; but his resistance would have availed but little had it not been for the courage and constancy wherewith the liberal minority in the Chambers opposed the partisans of retrogression.

CHAPTER X.

1827.

Speech on the death of the Duke of York—Theobald Wolfe Tone—Articles in *l'Etoile*—Prosecution of Mr. Sheil—Mr. Staunton—Defiance of the Government—The *Times*—Attempt to obtain evidence—Conduct of Mr. Hughes—True bills found.

MR. SHEIL'S position as a public man was daily becoming more recognised and defined. The ambition of his life had gradually come to be realized. His earliest dreams in boyhood had been of oratoric fame. While at Stoneyhurst, the hours of relaxation which his companions spent in active sports, had been by him frequently devoted to supernumerary studies in the art of rhetoric. The sense of great natural deficiencies had early been forced upon him by his failure in the recitations that formed part of the ordinary school exercises. He could neither restrain his voluble impetuosity nor modulate the harsh intona-

tions of his voice. When appointed on one occasion to read aloud the letter of Pliny describing his uncle's fate, "Sheil's exhibition," says one of his class-fellows, "I can never forget. His pronunciation of the Latin was French; his voice was pitched at the highest treble, and sustained there throughout; and excited probably by the subject of the letter, he rushed through it with the fervour and energy of one actually engaged in the scene described, and without a particle of modulation or inflection of voice from beginning to end; so that when he delivered the last word of the letter—'*vale!*' his voice, instead of being lowered, as at the end of a sentence, was still at its highest pitch, as if in the middle of one, and the word was accented broadly on the final syllable. As might be expected from such an audience, the reading of the letter was accompanied by continual laughter, which did not appear to have the slightest effect upon the reader, who was so thoroughly possessed by his subject as to be insensible to all disturbing influences. But when he delivered the final word, the burst of laughter was unbounded; and the effect of the performance was to obtain for Sheil the sobriquet of 'Vale,' which he bore long afterwards. Incidents like these forced upon him the consciousness of his defects, and

made him feel the humiliation of inferiority occasioned thereby. It was not in his nature to acquiesce in the continuance of such a condition; and he had a still stronger motive to exertion operating in the same direction. He had always, as long as I can recollect, been in the habit of speaking of eloquence as beyond all other objects of admiration; and to become a great public speaker was, from the outset, the professed object of his ambition. Aware as he soon became of the obstacles to its attainment in his striking defects of voice, utterance, personal appearance, and manner, he went to work to correct them all with an undoubting faith in his success, and a determination to spare no toil or effort to accomplish it. The course he pursued was to practise declamation, accompanied by gesture and reading aloud. He would often apply to me and others to criticise his performance, and bespeak our candid opinion of its merits or defects; and the earnestness with which he courted and entreated the most unmitigated exposure of his faults, and the thankful spirit in which he welcomed it, were not the least remarkable or least interesting traits of his character. The fact was, he was throughout sustained by the thorough conviction that he was destined to become one day a great orator; and I am satisfied

that never for a single day, even while he was at school, was that impression absent from his mind."* Subsequent care and practice had perfected the training thus begun in schoolboyhood, with such results as we have seen.

When the fate of the Duke of York became known, Mr. Sheil availed himself of the opportunity afforded by the first Catholic assembly held in the new year, to give utterance to a graceful tribute to the many personal virtues of the prince. He dwelt at considerable length on the proofs he had given of his care, while commander-in-chief, for the wants and comforts of the private soldier. He recalled the faults of his education, and the numerous beguilements wherewith his youth had been beset. At the approach of death, all enmity and resentment ought to be laid aside, and no feeling inconsistent with the respect that the wise and thoughtful ever own in the presence of the dread leveller, should find utterance amongst them. The obsequies of departed greatness were all that then remained to be performed.

"The pomp of death will, for a few nights, fill the gilded apartments in which his body will lie in state. The artist will endeavour to avert that decay to which even princes are doomed,

* Letter from Mr. Justice Ball to the author.

and embalm him with odours which may resist the cadaverous scent for a while. He will be laid in a winding-sheet fringed with silver and with gold—he will be enclosed in rich and spicy wood, and his illustrious descent and withered hopes will be inscribed upon his glittering coffin. The bell of St. Paul will toll; London, rich, luxurious, Babylonic London, will start at the recollection that even kings must die. The day of his solemn obsequies will arrive—the gorgeous procession will go forth in its funereal glory—the ancient chapel of Windsor Castle will be thrown open, and its gothic aisle will be thronged with the array of royalty—the emblazoned windows will be illuminated—the notes of holy melody will arise—the beautiful service of the dead will be repeated by the heads of the church, of which he will be the cold and senseless champion—the vaults of the dead will be unclosed—the nobles, and the ladies, and the high priests of the land, will look down into those deep depositories of the pride, and the vanity, and the ambition of the world. They will behold the heir to the greatest empire of the world taking possession, not of the palace, which was raised at such an enormous and unavailing cost, but of that 'house which lasts till doomsday.' The coffin will go sadly and slowly down; they will hear it as its ponderous mass strikes on the remains of its royal kindred; the chant will be resumed, a moment's awful pause will take place—the marble vault, of which none but the Archangel shall disturb the slumbers, will be closed—the songs of death will cease—the procession will wind through the aisles again, and restore them to their loneliness. The torches will fade in the open daylight—the multitude of the great, who will have attended the ceremony, will gradually disperse; they will roll again in their gilded chariots into the din and tumult of the great metropolis; the business, and the pursuits, and all the frivolities of life will be resumed, and the heir to three kingdoms will be in a week forgotten. We, too, shall forget, but, before we forget, let us forgive him."*

Speech delivered 3rd January, 1827.

But no peace-offering could efface the feelings of resentment which his former allusions to the Duke of York had caused. The extent to which these feelings were carried by more than one member of the royal family was not, indeed, fully known by him who had occasioned them until many years afterwards. But it was not long before he had abundant reason to feel that he had rendered himself the especial object of ministerial surveillance, and that vindictive purposes were entertained regarding him. The freedom where-with he incessantly assailed the whole system of intolerance and misrule, and the pitiless irony in which he held up to ridicule the inconsistencies and errors of those in power, rendered him pre-eminently obnoxious, if not peculiarly vulnerable, to the weapons of official enmity. "At this time, and up to the termination of the great struggle in 1829" (writes one who himself shared in many of the hazards of the period), "Sheil was in the most exposed position of any man in Ireland, for he went further than all others to provoke the attacks of the Crown, and was known to have written, or corrected for publication, all his speeches."*

An incident occurred about this time which led to

* Letter from M. Staunton, Esq., 2nd January, 1854.

the delivery of one of his most remarkable harangues, and subsequently to consequences of a very serious nature. A friend who had obtained one of the few copies which had reached Dublin of the "Memoirs of Wolfe Tone," then recently published, lent him the first volume, which opens with the diary of 1796. He was at once struck by the startling facts contained in it, and resolved to be the first to introduce them to the public through the medium of a speech at the Association, with an elaborate commentary from himself. But, before the commentary was prepared, the same friend called upon him with the intelligence that another copy had been obtained by the editor of one of the Dublin weekly newspapers, with the view of giving extracts from it in the next publication. This was upon the morning of the day upon which the Association was to meet; and, although Sheil had to go to the Four Courts, and attend to his business there, which was then considerable, he was determined not to be forestalled; so, when the usual hour of meeting came, he repaired to the Association, and uttered the speech as we now have it.

Holding in his hand the second volume of the Memoirs, he introduced, with no unartistic abruptness, the strange narrative of the French expedition

to Ireland, under the command of General Hoche, in the year 1796, of which Carnot had matured the plan at the suggestion, and with the counsel, of Wolfe Tone. From the narration of which he was about to give a summary, he wished to deduce warning and admonition to three very different classes:—To the Catholics, whose untimely dependance on the private promise of a minister had led them only to disappointment in 1800, when, had they been more self-reliant, they might have exacted terms; to the statesmen, who still paltered with a danger that accident had enabled their predecessors to quench in 1796, but whose re-kindled embers again smouldered beneath their feet; and lastly, to the proprietors of the soil, whose sectarian ascendency was not worth the perilous price they were, year after year, continuing to pay for it, in the hatred and resentment of a vast population. Omitting the earlier portions of Tone's personal history, in which he had been occupied with various schemes for creating an effectual organization in favour of Emancipation and Reform, and failing that, to effect the separation of the two kingdoms, Mr. Sheil at once directed the attention of his hearers to the period of his exile.

"In 1795, Theobald Wolfe Tone was compelled to retire from Ireland to the United States, where he had at first an intention of settling. . . . But ambition, or perverted patriotism, was among many passions paramount to every other; he was pursued by the recollections of Ireland; the memory of his country became a malady of his heart; and in the idealism of exile the scenes of oppression which he had witnessed, and at which his blood had boiled, rose with all the distinctness of unimpaired reality before him. The phantasms with which men condemned to leave their country are disastrously haunted, are, to men like Tone, prompters of great enterprise. There gradually grew up in his mind a design as adventurous as any of which the romance of history has left us an example. He formed the determination to strike a blow at England where he knew that she was most vulnerable, and to invite the French Republic to become his auxiliary in an enterprise which should put the British empire to hazard. Full of a purpose, which at first view appeared to be as extravagant as it was criminal, he set sail from America, and arrived at Havre on the first of February, 1796. Having reached Paris, he found himself in a state which men less ardent, and with less fixedness of intent, would have looked upon as desperate; he failed for a considerable time in obtaining access to any man in authority, and the little money in his possession was almost expended. He was without friends, without resources of any kind, and could scarcely express himself in the language of the country. It is, indeed, difficult to conjecture a state more utterly hopeless than that to which he was reduced. Yet, in the desolation of a great metropolis, he was upheld by that unalterable purpose from which the aliment of his soul was derived. At last he obtained an interview with the minister of war. His chief credentials, the documents on which he grounded his claim to the confidence of Charles Lecroix, were two votes of thanks which he had received as their Secretary from the Catholics of Ireland. . . . Although Lecroix had never heard of him before, he was struck by his project, and sent him to General Clarke,

whose family was connected with Ireland; but Clarke entertained such strange notions about the country from which his father had emigrated, that he inquired from him whether Lord Clare was likely to co-operate with the French, and whether the Duke of York would accept the sovereignty of Ireland in the event of its conquest by the French Republic. . . . .
Tone perceived that little could be effected with Clarke, and determined to go directly to the President of the Directory, who was no other than the celebrated Carnot, to whose genius the marvellous successes of France were in a great measure to be ascribed. An interview was obtained, in which the victorious mathematician listened to the enthusiastic Irishman, with a not very unnatural distrust in the feasibility of his project. He slowly acceded to it, and it was proposed by the French Government to send two thousand men to Ireland. This suggestion Tone treated as an absurdity. His reasoning was so cogent, that he prevailed upon the Directory to resolve upon an expedition of eight thousand men, with fifty thousand stands of arms; but Hoche, who enjoyed the highest military reputation, having been named to the chief command of the invading army, insisted on its being increased from eight to fifteen thousand men, with a large park of artillery, and arms sufficient to supply the insurgent population. The French Directory acceded to this requisition, and that large force, conveyed by seventeen ships of the line, sailed from Brest. . . . How must his heart have beaten when he beheld that great armament, with its vast sails dilated in some sort by his own aspiring spirit, steering its course to the island where his cradle was rocked, where the bones of his fathers were deposited, on whose green hills his eyes had first rested, and on whose lofty peaks, against which the Atlantic breaks in thunder, he felt assured that his triumphant standard would be unfurled! Happily for England, these visions of victory, when almost embodied in a fatal realization, were dispelled by the winds, called so justly 'the only unsubsidized' allies of England. . . . The French fleet was dispersed by a storm. Hoche was blown out of his course

with seven ships of the line; but ten sail of the line, with six thousand troops, reached the Irish coast. Wolfe Tone says, that they were so near that he could have pitched a biscuit on shore. A landing might have been at once effected, but the Directory had given orders that the fleet should proceed to Bantry Bay. Ten ships of the line did proceed there, with a force which might have marched to Dublin, and lay for five days in a harbour on the Irish coast. It is a most remarkable circumstance that, in the absence of Hoche, the command of the army should have devolved upon Grouchy, in reference to whom these words are set down in the diary kept by Wolfe Tone: 'All now depends upon Grouchy.' . . . That Grouchy was an instrument of Providence it may not be irrational to think; but that such implements of safety will always be provided is not an article of faith to believe. Grouchy did not land; and Ireland was preserved. I have done with the incidents in the Memoirs of Wolfe Tone. . . . My purpose is different from that which may, perhaps, be imputed to me. But what I deeply deprecate, I may be permitted honestly to apprehend, and I own that the perusal of this book has excited in my mind alarms to which I think myself justified in giving expression. The voice of admonition is grating to the ear, but the reflections suggested by this volume ought not to be suppressed, however disinclined a minister may be to listen to them. I believe this country to be exposed to the most serious risks, in consequence of the fatal policy which the Government are pursuing. I consider their security to be false, and believe them to be treading on the edge of a fearful peril. Who that sees the sleep-walker advancing to the precipice would heed how rudely he might awaken him, if by boldly grasping him he might drag him from the gulf? . . . . . In the year 1796, the Catholic population of this country did not exceed three millions; it now exceeds double that number. In 1796, the French Republic had not recanted its profession of infidelity, and was deeply stained with the blood of martyred priests and pontiffs. The throne of France is now occupied by a sovereign

anointed with legitimacy; the altar has been rebuilt, and the ancient Catholic Church lifts up its mitred and apostolic head. Attractive relations have arisen where an intercept had previously been created by many repulsive circumstances. The application of steam in naval warfare deserves to be taken into account, and more especially by Mr. Canning, who recently told us that modern science had 'taken from the winds their proverbial fickleness.' To that eminent man I would more peculiarly commend the 'Memoirs of Wolfe Tone.' He cannot fail to recollect, that not very long ago, when he made it his boast that from the recesses in which they were immured, he could let loose the popular passions, and sweep the French monarchy in a hurricane away, Monsieur de Chateaubriand, and Monsieur Hyde de Neuville, and Monsieur de Beaumont, indignant at this presumptuous intimation, pointed to Ireland with a fierce and retaliatory menace, and warned him and his colleagues to beware, lest France should be provoked to do what it was so obvious that it was in her power to accomplish. Mr. Canning must have been stung to the soul by this formidable retort: he acted wisely in not having noticed it in Parliament; but I do think it is his duty to tell his associates, to whose fatal obstinacy the perils of this country are to be referred, that from the foes of England this disastrous advantage ought to be taken away, and by an act of wise and timely justice, a country exposed to imminent peril should be impregnably secured. He ought to go with this book in his hand into the cabinet, and plead for the emancipation of Ireland, with the 'Memoirs of Wolfe Tone.' . . . The likelihood is that, no matter how strongly seconded, France would be ultimately vanquished; but to what a condition would Ireland be reduced, when the domination of England had been restored in its despotic plenitude, and the penal code in all its baneful vigour had been renewed? . . . In the Cromwellian spoliation, the misfortunes of Ireland were turned by the soldiers of the slaughterer of Drogheda, to account. Conquest was followed by confiscation; but Protestantism is now seised in fee of the island, and of the national calamity

nothing substantial could be made. The Protestant proprietors of Ireland are as much interested in the pacification of the country (which can only be effected by the redress of the national grievances) as we are. There is, indeed, a class of political sectaries whose livelihood is derived from their religion. The fouler as well as the smaller birds of prey, croak and flutter in the fear that the receptacles of ascendency, in which their loathsome nests are built, should be disturbed. But a Protestant gentleman of rank and fortune, who cannot be swayed by the same sordid considerations, should consider the permanent establishment of order, the reconciliation of the people to the Government, the abandonment of all revolutionary purpose, the security of the country from all foreign danger and from all intestine commotion, as objects which, at the sacrifice of his bad predominance, would be cheaply purchased. A Cromwellian proprietor views the tract of woods and lawns with which the piety of his puritanical forefather was rewarded, with all the pride with which the consciousness of long transmitted property is attended. The hope of transmitting his estate to his descendants is one of the most pleasurable of his emotions. He devises his property in a strict settlement, and, by complicated limitations, endeavours to impart a feudal perpetuity to his possessions; and yet, an admonition, solemn as the warning of Lochiel, might, perhaps, be appropriately given him, that the time might come when, amidst the shouts of insurgent onslaught, his mansion should be given to the flames; those dearer than his life-blood should lie slaughtered or dishonored in that home in which they could no longer find a sanctuary, and horrors should be enacted at the contemplation of which religion trembles and humanity recoils. That the daring intimations to which I have been sufficiently venturesome to give this impassioned utterance, will be read by those to whom they are intended to be addressed, with feelings of resentment, I do not doubt; but by the insensibility of Protestant Ireland to the perils which attend upon us all, a fearless adjuration is required. If I thought that by a reference to such topics no

useful purpose could be accomplished, I should not warn men of a peril which it is not in their power to avert. In the city of lava, with a burning mountain above, and with Herculaneum buried beneath, what would it avail to bid men listen to the roll of the subterranean thunder? Wherefore speak of an eruption to those by whom Vesuvius cannot be extinguished? but it is in the power of those to whom I have addressed this intrepid invocation to save themselves from the peril that overhangs them, and to put the volcano out."

A report of this speech appeared in the *Morning Register* of the 22nd January. It was of more than ordinary length, and bore the evident marks of careful and minute correction. Few if any of those by whom it was read with just and impartial eyes, even thought of ascribing to its author unconstitutional designs. But the Dionysian vigilance of the Home Office discerned insidious treason in the delineation of events which had occurred thirty years before, and the earnest deprecation wherewith their recital had been accompanied. Beneath the luxuriant verbiage of the orator, deadly sedition, it was said, lay coiled. Government resolved that a prosecution should be forthwith instituted against the publisher, and, if possible, against the speaker. Some days, however, elapsed, during which no step was taken; and it was subsequently believed that great hesitation was felt by Mr. Plunket with regard to the proceedings. But

while he doubted, new materials were unconsciously supplied by the object of the meditated prosecution, and by the artful use of these, the Attorney-General suffered himself to be persuaded that a conviction might be secured.

At the meeting of the Association which took place on the 29th of January, a motion was made by a gentleman named Coppinger, that certain resolutions and documents should be inserted in some of the Paris newspapers, which had shown a disposition to advocate their cause. Mr. Sheil objected to this proceeding, as furnishing a handle to the Government to impute to the body correspondence with foreign states. There could be no objection to any one who pleased writing in a French journal. "In his own individual capacity he had availed himself of such knowledge as he possessed of the French language, to write several articles in one of the French newspapers, with no other view than to apprise the French people of their exact condition, and to make the Government of these countries aware of the perils to which they were exposed. But this was his own act, in which his fellow-citizens were not involved. As far as he was himself concerned, he did not care a jot what might be said upon the subject; but at the same time he

would be exceedingly sorry to see a national correspondence established between the organs of the French Government and the Catholic Association. Nor was it necessary. France already knew much, and if Catholic Emancipation did not pass, France should know more, of Ireland. But let not that knowledge be conveyed through the medium of resolutions, on which strong imputations might be founded. There was a substantial difference between individual and public acts. He would always support measures of a temperate character, while he would not cease to deliver strong sentiments in a strong way. It was not his object to excite the Catholics; his purpose was to awaken in the Irish Protestants a just sense of their condition. It was for the latter his speeches were intended. His purpose was to awaken them from their lethargy, to arouse them from the slumbers of an insane security, to show them that they stood on the brink of a gulf, and bid them sound its depths. With this end he would not cease to utter the same lugubrious admonitions,—he would not pause in the raven cry."* These considerations prevailed, and Mr. Coppinger's motion was withdrawn. But upon the frank avowal of Mr. Sheil,

* Speech at Fourteen Days' Meeting, 29th January, 1827.

that he was indeed the oft-suspected writer of the articles which had from time to time appeared in *L'Etoile*, those who had long lurched by his unguarded path believed that their opportunity at length was come. On the 2nd February, the Crown solicitor wrote to Mr. Staunton, the proprietor of the *Morning Register*, that unless he gave up the author of the speech on Wolfe Tone, he should be prosecuted for its publication as a libel. When this letter was placed in the hands of Mr. Sheil, he at once authorized the admission that the report had been furnished by him.

Application was then made to Mr. Sheil himself, who confirmed the admission of his having spoken, and subsequently written and transmitted for publication, the speech regarding Wolfe Tone. He was required in consequence to enter into recognizances to appear before the next commission. On the 5th February he attended for the purpose before the magistrates of the head police-office, accompanied by Mr. O'Connell and Mr. Woulffe* as his sureties, and by several other gentlemen of his acquaintance. Thus far, no allusion whatever had been made to the statement respecting the articles in the French papers.

* Afterwards Chief Baron of the Exchequer.

But during the evening of the day on which Mr. Sheil had entered into recognizances, a second communication was received by Mr. Staunton, in which he was required to give up the author of the avowal above mentioned. It happened that by some accident the second speech had not been published in the *Morning Register* until the day after it had appeared in other daily papers. The report had not in point of fact been furnished in manuscript by Mr. Sheil or by any other person, but it had been copied literally, and even with some slight typographical errors, from another journal. Nor was there any longer a disposition to meet the demands made on the part of the Government in the spirit of unreserve hitherto shown.

The attempt to extract "evidence drop by drop, to win out of a newspaper office piecemeal acknowledgments, to get these drippings of admission, was, to say the least of it, an exceedingly shabby proceeding."* Nor was this all. This second demand betrayed a design of arraigning the speaker and publisher of the matter in question, on the ground of constructive sedition to be sustained by cumulative

* Statement of Mr. Sheil, on the 7th February, 1827. See also statement of the facts in *Morning Register*.

proof. Acting by the advice of eminent counsel, Mr. Sheil resolved to refuse peremptorily to aid the Attorney-General by any further admission, and it was not in the power of Mr. Staunton, had he been so disposed, to supply the Crown solicitor with the proof required. Nevertheless, on the following day (the 6th February) notice was formally given to him that he was to be included in the prosecution, and on the 10th of February he was made aware that informations had been sworn against him for a seditious libel, and he was required to enter into recognizances to appear at the ensuing commission.

The conduct of the Government in this proceeding created surprise rather than apprehension in the persons who were more immediately involved. Upon the buoyant temper of him who was its principal object, the effect produced was that of indignation alone. He felt convinced that, as against the proprietor of the journal assailed, the prosecution must fail; and that, even if successful against himself, it would greatly tend to enhance his influence and popularity. "The case, as far as you are concerned," he said to Mr. Staunton, "must end in mere vapour. Their object is manifestly to get hold of me. Your paper must be immensely served by this proceeding. It

will be equivalent to a fortune. You are married, and fortune is an object to you. I am without circumspection or empire, and therefore I attend less to money, or the loss of it, which a fine may impose on me. I own I consider the whole of this matter rather a piece of good luck to you and me than otherwise; for I think we shall escape their toils; and if we do, we both materially gain."

In public his language, though more grave, was not less expressive of fearlessness and scorn. The question raised was one between the misdirected authority of the Crown and the right of the public at large to free discussion. To the public, therefore, he boldly appealed in his own vindication; and well knowing the prejudices that rapidly accumulate around the accused in the interval between accusation and trial, where silence is observed, he did not hesitate to lay bare, with all the unreserve of truth, the facts of the case, and by anticipation to invite the verdict of opinion regarding them. Of his prosecutors he spoke in terms of natural resentment, not unmingled with derision. But he took care to distinguish between what he justly considered the reluctant compliance of Mr. Plunket, and the eager bigotry and partisanship of the other advisers of the

Crown. Yet, far from deprecating the personal exertions of the Attorney-General against him, he specially invited and provoked them. A paragraph had appeared in the Government newspapers, stating that Mr. Plunket would be obliged in a few days to leave for London, to attend his parliamentary duties. Alluding to this rumour, Mr. Sheil said that he asked but one favour of Mr. Plunket, namely, that of his presence at the trial. He wished to confront him, that he might remind him how much more vehement he had himself once been,—how far he had exceeded the limits observed by him. "He would cut down Goliath with his own sword. He would remind him of the time when he uttered a sentiment in which *he* did not participate, and spoke of flinging British connexion to the winds. He wanted his presence for these purposes, for he knew he must quail in this appeal to himself."* Nothing could be more defiant than the tone of the entire address, and the enthusiasm it evoked was proportionate.

Some days afterwards, on his health being given at a public dinner, he again adverted to the subject.

"If I have spoken of future events of a disastrous nature, I have only said that which others have

* Speech, 7th February.

repeatedly spoken. I have only looked through the political telescope, and declared that I saw a distant contingency which it was the duty of statesmen to avert. I may be, I sincerely wish that I may be, mistaken in saying that what has already happened may again take place. But whether I am right or wrong in these alarming anticipations, my only object has been to give a timely admonition, and to make the men who are entrusted with the government and the future destinies of Ireland—

> 'Privy to their country's fate,
> Which, happily foreknowing, may prevent.'"

He pointed out the absurdity of supposing that he and his associates could desire civil commotion in the very outset of which they must inevitably be the first victims. He likewise dwelt upon the circumstance that many of the most opulent merchants and proprietors of ancient estate were among his hearers on the occasion, and that by none of them was his language construed in the sense ascribed to it by the law advisers of the Crown. But if there were danger to the public peace in the recital of historical events so pregnant with admonition, why did not those who were its official guardians warn them that they were going too far? Why had

they not stopped the wheels before they had taken fire?"*

In England, opinion seemed much divided regarding the prosecution. Few had read the speech on Wolfe Tone's Memoirs; fewer still had read the work itself. All that was generally known was, that Tone had been taken prisoner, after the defeat of the French expedition to Ireland in 1798; that, when condemned to death by a court-martial, he had asked to be allowed to die as a soldier of the republic, whose commission he bore, and that, on being refused, he had avoided the ignominy that awaited him by committing suicide. That the personal history of such a man should have been selected as the theme for popular declamation in Ireland, naturally created strong feelings of disapproval in the minds of all who had not taken the trouble to understand the real nature of the question legally raised, or the true meaning and tenor of the speeches impugned. In the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Examiner*, the just distinction between practical warnings derived from history, and reckless incentives to treason, was indeed dispassionately argued. In the *Times*, however, a different

* Speech at Dinner of the Friends of Purity of Election, 12th February, 1827.

course had at first been taken; this was of the more importance because that journal had uniformly and ably supported the claims of the Catholics.

In an article on the 6th February, the speech of 19th January was described as one in which "hints were thrown out conducive to the success of the next invasion by the French or any other government within steam-boat range of Ireland." Mr. Sheil is then represented as being "one of the least discreet and most dangerous counsellors by whom a people or a party could be directed. . . . Whether it was worth while to prosecute Mr. Sheil for the manifest mischief of his intentions was quite a different question from the wisdom or folly of his words. As the grant of emancipation would be death to the notoriety of those who subsisted upon the clamour for it, so they were never more thoroughly disappointed than when Government seemed to forget that such men were buzzing about its ears. It was not impossible, however doubtful, that in the present session this national measure might assume a more promising aspect than before; but if Mr. Sheil were sentenced and effectually silenced, the act would be more characteristic of a Government which had the real welfare of the Catholics at heart, than of one which opposed their emancipation." From

an entry in Moore's diary, it appears that Sheil had written to him to use his influence with the editor to prevent the repetition of articles such as the foregoing, which was calculated to prejudge his case, and thus to do material injury.*

Meanwhile no means were left unemployed to obtain the evidence which had been vainly sought from Mr. Staunton. A Government reporter usually attended the meetings of the Association, avowedly for the purpose of informing his employers of all that took place there, and of being able to verify his account by a reference to his notes when required. Through some accident or inadvertence, the report of the proceedings on the 29th January failed to supply any adequate version of the words to which a seditious import had been ascribed. Upon careful inquiry, it was found that the report containing the inculpated words had first appeared in the *Dublin Morning Post* the day after they were spoken: and that from its columns they had been copied into other newspapers. The proprietor, Mr. Carrick, was called upon to give up the manuscript. This was peremptorily refused. The name of the reporter was then demanded, but to this also a negative reply was given. Foiled in this

* 12th February, 1827.

attempt, those who conducted the prosecution resolved to have recourse to another and yet stranger expedient. Mr. C. Hughes, by whom it was ascertained that the much-coveted report had been furnished, while occupied professionally in one of the courts was taken into custody, under a warrant from the magistrates, and informed that he must forthwith attend before their worships. No cause was assigned nor any explanation given for this proceeding; but his suspicions as to the true object being excited, he made up his mind, if possible, not to be made an instrument in hands that he regarded as busied in the work of oppression. Obeying the directions of the officers who had been sent to arrest him, he expostulated with them as to the misinterpretation that might be put upon his appearance along with them in the public streets, and adroitly induced them to allow him to proceed by a different and somewhat circuitous route to the police-office. On his way, he was thus enabled to obtain the assistance of two legal friends, who accompanied him before the magistrates. The investigation was conducted with closed doors, and lasted several hours. The varied interrogatories of the bench were objected to by Mr. Hughes' counsel, on the ground that his answers might possibly tend

to criminate himself; upon which an offer was made on behalf of the Crown that he should be guaranteed against all consequences. Without reference to his notes, he declared his inability to answer the questions which were put to him, regarding the speech of Mr. Sheil. It was proposed that they should forthwith be sent for to his residence; but with this obliging offer Mr. Hughes refused to comply. The case was then adjourned, and strong injunctions were given to the inflexible reporter not only to consult his notes, but to be careful to bring the whole of them with him when his attendance should be next required. He was, moreover, compelled to enter into recognizances, himself in 1000*l.* and two sureties of 500*l.* each, to appear whenever called upon. His first act on reaching home was to commit the entire of his notes to the flames. The fact was, that upon the evening of the day on which the avowal of the contributions to the French journal had been made in the Association, he had met Mr. Sheil at his own house, by appointment, and had there re-written, under his dictation, the speech as it appeared in the *Dublin Morning Post*. Surmise pointed to some circumstance of the kind, but its actual occurrence was at the time unknown; and the demeanour of this upright and

high-spirited man in the presence of the magistrates, left nothing to be hoped for from threats and intimidation. As a last resource, other motives were tried. Mr. Hughes was a second time summoned by an officer of police, not as previously to appear before a regularly constituted tribunal, but to attend in private one of the law advisers of the Crown. The interview took place in one of the apartments of the court, where the commission usually sat. Every argument was exhausted by the learned functionary in question to induce the reporter to become a witness for the prosecution, but without avail. The conduct of Mr. Hughes throughout was grounded upon a high sense of what was due to himself, and the service in which he was engaged. That service is pre-eminently one which implies the strict observance of private confidence and public honour; and instead of being, as it now is, a recognised and respected profession, the practice of reporting must rapidly degenerate into the basest and most pestilent system of espionage, if its members could be browbeaten by those in power into subserviency to their political needs, or beguiled into becoming the instruments of party vengeance or misrule.

The commission of Oyer and Terminer was opened on the 17th February, Mr. Justice Johnson and Mr. Justice Jebb presiding. Mr. O'Connell, Mr. Holmes

and Mr. Paine were retained for the defendants. On the 19th of February, 1827, a bill of indictment was laid before the grand jury of the city of Dublin, charging Mr. Sheil with having uttered, and the proprietor and printer of the *Morning Register* with having published, a seditious libel. Some hours elapsed before they could agree, and while awaiting their decision, Mr. Sheil amused his counsel by an incessant flow of anecdote and humour, affording a singular contrast to the gravity of demeanour which others have manifested under similar circumstances. "We passed a remarkably pleasant day," writes one of those gentlemen; "it was a curious occasion for such pleasantry; but Sheil kept us in a continuous state of excitation and enjoyment by his most agreeable, lively, and engaging talk." He discussed without affectation the consequences which might ensue from an unfavourable result of the impending trial, and said that, although "some months' imprisonment might be a very serious infliction on the father of a large family, or a man in great business at the bar, in his comparative youth he thought he should be able to laugh away the hours with friends and visitors."*

* Letter from Mr. Justice Perrin to the author, 6th December, 1853.

At half-past two o'clock, Sir William Smith, foreman of the grand jury, appeared in court, and handed in the bill, which had been found to be "true." In about half-an-hour the Attorney-General entered the court, and called for the appearance of Richard Sheil. It was intimated that he was in attendance, and in a few minutes he appeared, accompanied by Mr. W. H. Curran.

The look and manner of Mr. Plunket indicated to those who knew him that he was not insensible to the personal and political reproaches which, in England as well as in Ireland, the prosecution had drawn down upon him. His old and attached friend, Mr. Peter Burrowes, sat beside him. The real sentiments of both were far more in unison with those of the accused than with any which could be supposed to animate the Government they professionally represented; but Mr. Plunket was committed to the proceeding, and knew not how to draw back.

Mr. Holmes applied for a copy of the indictment. This was objected to upon technical grounds by the counsel for the Crown; but the objection being over-ruled, a copy was handed to counsel for the traverser. It occupied forty folio sheets of parchment. On the following morning, the Solicitor-General

(Mr. Joy), addressing the court, intimated that, if the defendant desired to traverse *in prox.*—in other words, to avail himself of his right to defer entering his plea to the indictment until the next commission, the Crown would not object, provided its consent were asked, but they must contest the right, if asserted, as setting a dangerous precedent. Mr. Holmes and Mr. Perrin agreed that the right was, in point of law, incontestable under various statutes. Mr. O'Connell cited many authorities, and referred to the case of the Seven Bishops, who had been refused permission in 1688 to traverse *in prox.*—a decision solemnly declared unjust and illegal. "It is our undoubted right here, and we will not accept it as a favour." The court pronounced their unhesitating opinion that the right existed; and intimated that Mr. Sheil might stand out upon his own recognizance until the ensuing commission. On the evening of the same day the Attorney-General sailed for England.

CHAPTER XI.

1827.

Mr. Canning premier—Suspension of agitation—*Nolle prosequi*—King's counsel—Accident to Mr. Sheil while riding—Death of Mr. Canning—Lord Manners—Renewal of agitation—Lord Anglesea Viceroy—Agrarian disturbances—Wealth of the Established Church.

ON the 27th February, six weeks after the death of the Duke of York, Lord Liverpool, who for fifteen years had held the office of Prime Minister, was struck with fatal illness. The bond which so long had held together the coalition of friends and opponents of religious liberty, was suddenly dissolved, and all parties awaited the result with breathless anxiety. The pause was long, and as day after day rolled by without any announcement of a solution, the public began to have a sense, though a dim and imperfect

one, of the difficulties that encompassed the situation. We now read the events of that singular interlude between the great acts of ostensible history, with the help of many lights that were then borne in the dark lanthorns of "private and confidential" communication. The King, engrossed, as usual, with selfish solicitude for his own ease and enjoyment, was full of fair and false words, alternately for Canning and for Eldon. He asked the advice of each apart, and affected to be swayed by both in turn. At first he was full of the idea that the leader of the Commons might easily be flattered into retaining the secondary post he had hitherto filled, by being allowed to choose his new superior. George IV. tried every means to persuade him that an anti-Catholic peer would alone be able to command a majority in the Lords, and that consequently there was no choice but to seek, if possible, another premier like Lord Liverpool. But Canning had grown weary of subserviency, and had taken his resolve. Instead of opposing his Majesty's proposal, he at once acquiesced in it so far as to declare that he would throw no difficulty in the way, and that he should cheerfully retire in order that the experiment might be fairly made of forming a cabinet united in resistance to all concession. But was this

possible? Canning declared that he did not think it impracticable, although it might be difficult. His Majesty professed to be sensible of his magnanimity, and forthwith set about the generous task.*

The veteran Chancellor was ready to make the attempt; but Mr. Peel declined to join, feeling that in the balanced state of parties in the House of Commons, and remembering that "he differed from every one of his colleagues in that House on the Catholic question,"† such an attempt would be vain. Mr. Canning was again summoned, and told by the Sovereign that he was regarded by him as indispensable to the public service, but that, as in a new coalition he must necessarily possess the greatest share of practical influence, more especially after the confession of the high Tory section that they feared to alienate him, he ought to be content with appointing one of them to be the nominal head of the administration, leaving all questions and measures to be freely discussed and dealt with as they arose. Canning, however, saw his position clearly, and told his disingenuous sovereign that he could not submit to be excluded for life, avowedly on account of his

* Speech of Mr. Canning, 1st May, 1827.

† Letter of Mr. Peel to Lord Eldon, 9th April, 1827. Life of Lord Eldon, vol. ii., p. 589.

opinions, from an office which otherwise he was deemed qualified to fill, and that to accept a subordinate office under a person confessedly selected for his want of equal fitness, would be the most palpable and humiliating recognition of such a rule.* He did not pretend to have higher claims to the premiership than other men; but as he had consented to serve under one of those from whom he differed on the Catholic question, they could not reasonably object to serve under him with whom, on that single point, they did not agree. Personal fitness for the exalted trust was the only ground of choice he could understand; any other would be irreconcilable with that entire equality respecting opinions which had heretofore been acknowledged as the only honourable basis of a coalition.

The King was unable to overcome these spirited resolutions, but, unwilling to forego all hope of extrication from the conflicting doubts to which his mind was a prey, he continued still to waver. Intimations, couched in the form of deprecation, but which sounded in the royal ear not very unlike menace, were made on the 31st March by eight noble borough-owners, that, in the event of Mr. Canning's appointment as

* Speech of Mr. Canning, 1st May, 1827.

premier, their support would be withdrawn from the Government. On the other hand, the country began to show manifest symptoms of impatience, and more than one motion on the subject had been made in the House of Commons. At last, upon the 10th April, Mr. Canning received directions to form a Ministry. The Duke of Wellington, Lord Eldon, Mr. Peel, Lord Bathurst, Lord Melville, and Lord Westmoreland withdrew, and their places were filled up by the Marquis of Anglesea, Lord Lyndhurst, Mr. Sturges Bourne, Lord Goderich, the Duke of Clarence, and the Duke of Portland; Lord Dudley and Ward became Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Goulburn was succeeded by Mr. Lamb as Secretary for Ireland. Lord Lansdowne entered the Cabinet without office; and of the twelve persons by whom it was constituted, three only were opponents of Emancipation. It was still understood that the subject was to be regarded as an open question; but Mr. Peel, in stating the ground of his secession, declared that the impulse which must be necessarily imparted to its future progress, by the transfer of influence and patronage from an anti-Catholic Premier to one of opposite opinions, appeared to him in itself sufficient to justify his withdrawal.

On the other hand, no present expectations could be held out to the Catholics of the definite or complete settlement of the question. Mr. Canning himself had formerly introduced a Bill, enabling Catholic peers to sit in the House of Lords; and there were many of the most offensive instances of exclusion from civil trusts and distinctions, which it was in the power of a tolerant and impartial minister practically to bring to an end. There was nothing, for example, more odious or unjust than the systematic refusal of silk gowns to the Catholic bar; and there were many valuable offices, to the acceptance of which the oath of supremacy was not by statute rendered a bar. The Catholics were ready place reliance on the intentions of the new Government, and to make large allowance for the difficulties wherewith it was beset. They did not deceive themselves regarding immediate legislation, nor did Mr. Canning leave himself open to be afterwards told that by him they had been deceived. "When asked what he would do with this great but unfortunate question, he would speak very plainly. It was only to the good sense and good feeling of the people of both countries that he looked for its progress; and that progress would be retarded by any attempt to provoke opinion among one class, or to

stifle it with the opposite, at the risk of a convulsion in one or the other part of the United Kingdom. . . Much as he valued carrying Emancipation for the tranquillity of Ireland (and he estimated it at a very high rate), he would not provoke, even for that purpose, the sort of passive resistance which might, he feared, be aroused in Great Britain. . . . If the parties comported themselves calmly, and refrained from factious conduct which was likely to provoke an active resistance, he was persuaded that the mind of the people of England, or of such portion of them as were hostile to the question, would be gradually brought to take a more rational view of the subject. With these sentiments, he was prepared to say that he would not prematurely stir up the feelings of the people of England for a theoretic though essential good." Conciliating and forbearing as was the tone of this announcement, it indicated too plainly the tendency and intentions of his new ministers to find cordial acceptance with the King. A few days afterwards, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London informed the prelates assembled at Lambeth, that they were authorized to declare that the King's resolution to oppose all further concession of the Catholic claims remained

unshaken, and that his opinions on the subject were the same as those of his father were known to have been.

When the news of Mr. Canning's appointment to the premiership became known in Ireland, feelings of exultation at the fall of his rivals were strangely mingled with misgivings as to the terms on which he might have been induced to take office. It was the 14th April, and the Association had been summoned to meet in the afternoon of the same day. There was no time for preconcert, and each individual spoke as he felt impressed by the tidings that had been received. Mr. O'Connell gave vent to "his delight, at the respite which Lord Eldon's removal would afford. If a liberal and impartial Government lasted but for a month, it would go far to destroy the faith of the time-serving in that affected bigotry which they used as a hand-rope to climb the ladder of preferment." The speech of Mr. Sheil, who had just returned from a sanguinary assize at Clonmel, was full of gloom and sadness. The spectral forms he had lately gazed upon, haggard with grief and guilt, still haunted him. Rumours already prevailed that the new Prime Minister had agreed not to make Emancipation a Cabinet question. With fearless and almost fierce reproaches he denounced as morally re-

sponsible for the perpetuation of agrarian barbarism and bloodshed, the politicians who persisted in upholding a system that perverted all forms of justice, and poisoned the very spirit of social civilization. All confessed the frightful condition of things, but when asked for a remedy, many were dumb. They refused to try religious liberty as a specific; yet they owned that they had no other. "When Mr. Portman, not long ago, inquired of Mr. Peel what measure he would substitute for Emancipation, he honestly stated that he knew of none. Others were willing enough to prescribe, but they all differed as to the mode of cure. They reminded one of the doctors in Hogarth's picture who have each other by the throat while the patient is at the last gasp."*

Notwithstanding, however, much that was calculated to sow distrust and disheartenment in the popular mind, a general disposition was manifested in Ireland to receive the speech of the minister as the proclamation of an armistice, which might lead ere long to the establishment of permanent peace. On the 5th May, Mr. Sheil proposed in the Association, that its ordinary meetings should for the present be discontinued.

* Speech in Association, 14th April, 1827.

"The time had arrived when proof should be given to England, that what the full stretch of legislative power could not effect—what an act of parliament, framed upon principles the most despotic, and constructed with all the perverse skill and malevolent nicety of legal art, could not achieve—a single measure of conciliation, or he should rather say, the mere intimation of a more just and kindly feeling in the future Government of the country, could at once and instantaneously accomplish. . . . . Justice and kindness could do what severity and rigour were incapable of effecting, and the time had come, if not for the complete dissolution, for at least the temporary suspension, of that assembly. In his opinion they ought to give earnest to the Government of their disposition to assist its beneficent intentions towards the country; of their solicitude to accommodate themselves in any particular to its views, when they had once been convinced (as they were convinced) that a sincere disposition existed in the leading members of the Administration, to carry that measure upon which the happiness of Ireland mainly depended. He had not risen for the purpose of making a specific motion, because, from the peculiar circumstances in which he stood, he did not wish that a measure of adjournment should originate with him. But he should not be deterred by any consideration from stating what he believed to be not only the most generous and the most graceful, but also the wisest course which, under existing circumstances, they could adopt. . .

"A man had been placed at the head of affairs who was devoted to their cause, and whose devotion to it was the ground upon which he had been deserted by his former colleagues. . . In the triumph of that philosophical statesman, the cause not only of liberty but of intellect had obtained a victory. The great struggle which had recently taken place was a contest between mind and power; the grand cabal which lay defeated and shattered at the feet of that celebrated man may be said to have been vanquished by the ascendency of genius over all the might which the confederated oligarchy, by which the empire had been so long governed, could bring against him. . . .

It was an additional circumstance of honour to Mr. Canning, that, as he himself recently stated, he was a poor man. . . Independently of the other advantages which must flow from the proceeding, he advised they would show to the people of England and the King of England, that the true way to tranquillize Ireland was to treat her with kindness, and to win her affections and her gratitude. For his own part, violent and intemperate as he had been deemed, there was nothing which he more sincerely and devoutly wished, than to see his country at peace, to behold a reconciliation between all parties in that country, and England and Ireland inseparably bound together by mutual interests, and a community of rights and privileges. He had always been convinced that the real happiness of Ireland could never be achieved except by an identity with England, and a complete consolidation with her empire, which could never be effected while differences of religion were made the standard of political distinction. He considered the diffusion of English habits, principles, and opinions as the greatest blessing that could befal his country."*

Mr. O'Connell eulogized the tone and tenor of this speech, in which he entirely agreed, and moved that the Association should adjourn for six weeks. Mr. Wyse followed in the same strain, and concluded by seconding the motion, which was unanimously adopted.

Public dinners were given to Mr. Sheil, while he was the subject of prosecution, at Wexford on the 22nd March, at Waterford on the 28th, and at Clonmel on the 12th April. He accepted likewise an

* 5th May, 1827.

invitation to a public dinner in Louth on the 17th April. On his way, his journey was suddenly arrested, near the town of Dogheda, by thousands who had waylaid him for the purpose of conducting him in triumph into their city. Remonstrances were unavailing, and he was forced to comply. From every portion of the country, testimonies were offered to the indefatigable zeal he had so long manifested in the public cause, and warm professions of sympathy for him, as the object of attack on the part of the Government.

A sincere desire was manifested on the part of the new administration to appease angry passions, and to neutralize, as far as possible, every cause of resentment and irritation. The case of Mr. Sheil had stood over, as we have seen, from the 20th February; the period for the sittings of the next commission now approached, and it became necessary therefore to consider what was to be done. The course taken by Mr. Canning was one highly characteristic of him. At a meeting of the Cabinet, he proposed to read the portion of the speech which had been made the subject of indictment, desiring that he might be stopped at any sentence or expression for which a member might be called to order, if it were spoken

in the House of Commons. Having concluded the citations without any of his colleagues attempting the application of this test, the Premier declared that he would not authorize the prosecution of any man for a speech which was not unparliamentary. Instructions were accordingly sent to Ireland; and a rule of *nolle prosequi* was in consequence entered by the Attorney-General. These circumstances, many years afterwards, were mentioned to Mr. Sheil by Lord Melbourne.

Moderate as were the anticipations which had been formed from a change of ministers, they were doomed speedily to fade. The weakness of the new Government grew every day more palpable, and in their inability to comply with the prejudices of the King, or to overcome them, they were destined to incur in too many instances the reproach of disappointing the expectations they had raised. In both England and Ireland great injustice had been done to several of the most eminent practitioners of the law, by excluding them from the rank of King's counsel. Mr. Brougham and Mr. Denman were among the most conspicuous on one side of the Channel, while Mr. O'Connell, Mr. O'Loughlen, and Mr. Sheil felt as deeply aggrieved on the other.

Lord Eldon had more than once remonstrated against the injustice done to suitors as well as to the bar, by the exclusion of Mr. Brougham; but George IV. could not resist the temptation of revenging himself upon that great advocate for the truths he had eloquently spoken against him on the Queen's trial, and told the Chancellor "that he should take it as an affront to himself if such an appointment were proposed to him."* One of the first acts, however, of Mr. Canning's administration, was to grant a patent of precedency to Mr. Brougham. Mr. O'Connell had been led to expect that the professional wrong of seeing his juniors and inferiors put over his head, at which he had likewise so long chafed, would also be done away. But the tardy reparation came not. Easter and Trinity Terms, and then the Summer Circuit, passed without his receiving any intimation on the subject. He believed that he had been duped, and wrote in angry terms to Mr. Spring Rice upon the subject. That gentleman, who then filled the office of Under-Secretary for the Home Department, was able to satisfy him that there had been no breach of faith upon his part, or on that of other members of the Government, and that they were still desirous that

* Life of Lord Eldon, vol. iii., p. 2.

justice should be done. Mr. O'Connell wrote apologetically for the warmth of the language he had used, and did not again complain of what he felt it was not in the power of ministers to remedy. His Majesty continued obstinately resolved to perpetuate to the last this miserable injustice; and while he lived, Mr. O'Connell was never suffered to take his rightful place. Among the members of the outer bar, Mr. Sheil was, if possible, still more obnoxious, and was of course included in the same ban.

On the 28th June, while riding near Merrion, in the neighbourhood of Dublin, he was thrown from his horse, and received a severe fracture in the leg. Unable to rise from the ground, he called for assistance to some persons who were passing at the time. One of them on hearing his name, undertook to convey him home, and having placed him on the car on which he himself was travelling, supported him with considerate care, until they reached his residence in Holles Street. On arriving there, his unknown friend refused to leave him until he had aided in carrying him to his room. The sufferer more than once, amid expressions of thanks, asked to whom he was indebted for so much kindness; and it was only upon surrendering him into the hands of his physician, who

was almost immediately in attendance, that the stranger gave his name, which Mr. Sheil recognised as that of one of the most active Orangemen of Dublin. The fractured limb was, without difficulty, set by Mr. Francis White, by whom he was attended during the period of confinement which followed. On the following morning he sent to Mr. Curran, requesting to see him, and begged him to take charge of several briefs which required immediate attention; others he said Mr. Woulffe had promised to hold for him. He was suffering considerable pain, and had passed a sleepless night; but as he lay awake, the thought that most frequently occurred to him was the consolatory one that, with the exception of his only child, none were dependent upon him.

"I have never met any one," writes his medical friend, "suffering under pain and all the uncomfortableness attendant upon a long confinement, who bore up so well against such casualties, in severe attacks of gout and other illness. He had always great resources within himself; his mind was ever at work. He wrote a great deal during these periods, particularly while under the fracture. I remember him writing the sketch of one of our most eminent legal characters of the present day, for the New Monthly

Magazine, during the above confinement."* The sketch here alluded to was that of Mr. Blackburne,† published in the August number of the New Monthly Magazine of the same year. While still confined to his sofa, Mr. Doherty's promotion to the Solicitor-Generalship (which had for some time been in suspense, owing to the opposition of Lord-Chancellor Manners) was officially announced. This left a new opening in the Leinster circuit, and rendered Sheil more than usually anxious to be freed from his bandages, in order that he might appear at the more important assize towns. He had been engaged in two or three important cases at Waterford; and as the time drew near he became very restless, "and threatened to go with the splints on, and run all risks."‡ His progress to recovery, however, was not sufficiently rapid to enable him to make such an exertion with safety, and he was obliged reluctantly to forego his intention of doing so.

Before he had sufficiently recovered to leave his house, on the 10th August the tidings reached him of the unexpected death of Mr. Canning. No event

* Letter from Mr. Francis White, 24th March, 1854.

† Late Lord-Chancellor of Ireland.

‡ Letter from Mr. F. White, 4th April, 1854.

which had occurred for many years produced so general and profound a sensation in the public mind in Ireland, as the untimely end of this highly-gifted man. By family ties, and still more by congeniality of temperament, he was closely identified with the people of that country. They regarded him as one whose fame was a legitimate matter of national boast, and whose attainment of power was an augury, if not an assurance, of national good. He had been, from his first entrance upon public life, the undeviating advocate of religious toleration; and, though long associated in office with men who were its opponents, a wide-spread conviction prevailed that, like his friend and colleague Lord Wellesley, his presence in the Government was the means of mitigating much that was hurtful, and preparing the way for better things to come. On his part, the conduct of Mr. Canning, on many important occasions, served to verify the sincerity of his exclamation—"After all, I cannot forget that I am an Irishman." His speeches, so full of wit and imagination, had become a source of habitual enjoyment to the educated classes of the community; and how instinctively the popular mind regarded with exultation and confidence his recent elevation to the prime post of power, could not be better

indicated than in the readiness with which an acquiescence was shown in the suspension of agitation. There did not exist any other man of his class on account of whom such a cessation would have been dreamed of, or could have been obtained for an hour. Nor did the comparative weakness of his administration shake the popular faith in him. The cause was too obvious. He did not try to conceal it, and far from resenting his avowal, that beset with difficulties as he was on all sides, he dare not promise to attempt the immediate carrying of Emancipation, its most earnest claimants tacitly recognised the exigencies of his position, and seemed content to wait until he should be able to strengthen and to use it. Deep and genuiné was the grief which the intelligence of his premature decease occasioned. Every popular journal in Ireland appeared in mourning. An universal feeling spread everywhere that, for a policy of conciliation, the best hope was fled. He had been saluted by liberal France, on his recent advent to power, as "The Minister of representative Europe." His death was felt to be a heavy blow to the pacific and progressive cause of Constitutionalism; and men, hitherto averse to the thought of violent courses, when they beheld the Government of England soon afterwards

fall into the hands of the friends and flatterers of despotism, gradually learned to contemplate as unavoidable the resource of revolution. In domestic policy, analogous convictions tended to produce not wholly dissimilar results. The opening perspective of concession seemed suddenly about to close. The voice on which the wisdom of persuasion hung was hushed for ever; and nothing seemed to remain but a resort once more to the arduous and hazardous expedient of menacing agitation. Such were the feelings that influenced both O'Connell and Sheil; and upon the first occasion, when the latter re-appeared in public, he took occasion to review the entire course of policy which had been pursued by Government, and by Opposition, in and out of doors, for many years; and in a speech of unusual length, and more than ordinary comprehensiveness and precision, he demonstrated the necessity of re-animating all the religious and democratic influences which had heretofore been called into play. He gave credit to the more liberal portion of Lord Goderich's Cabinet for honest intentions, and disclaimed any wish to embarrass them. The Marquis of Anglesea, recently nominated to the office of Viceroy, had indeed spoken warmly in debate not long before, respecting the intemperance of the

Association. But he was not, therefore, to be looked upon as one insusceptible of conviction, when the means of judging, by personal observation, was afforded him. The speech thus concluded—

"With respect to the present ministry, they remain to be tried. As yet nothing has been done to induce us to look upon them with distrust; and although at first view the appointment of Lord Anglesea, who drew an unhappily figurative phrase from his profession, seems ill-omened, yet there is reason to think that his Lordship, whose friends said that he spoke in a 'civil sense,' has no notion of dragooning us into violence, or cutting us down into submission. His Lordship only used the rhetorical sabre—the *telum oratoris*, as it is called; and in justice we ought to weigh all his former votes against the ebullition of English pride, into which what he called our violence had betrayed him. Lord Anglesea is said to be an intelligent and an ambitious man, and his good sense should teach him, that an honourable ambition would be best gratified by his being the means of effectually tranquillizing, by appeasing the discontents of Ireland. Nor can I think that Lord Lansdowne would retain the Home Department, if an Orange Lord-Lieutenant were to succeed a nobleman whose power to serve us did not correspond with his inclination. Surveying the whole frame and constitution of the ministry, I own that I am disposed to place confidence in them; and although I recollect the difference between men in and out of office—between

'Patriots, busting with heroic rage,
And placemen all tranquillity and smiles;'

still I cannot bring myself to think that the Whigs, who were so long our true and faithful advocates, will yield to the temptations of 'tickling commodity,' and ever substantially desert us. Suspicion is a bad and mean passion, and until I see strong reason

to distrust them, I shall put a reliance in the majority of the Cabinet, who profess themselves to be our supporters. But let me tell you, in whom I place a far deeper and stronger trust. I trust, it is true, in Lord Lansdowne, I trust in Mr. Tierney, I trust in Lord Goderich, and more than in Lord Goderich, and more than in Mr. Tierney, and more than in even Lord Lansdowne, and more than in the whole array of ancient Whigs and new-fangled Tories, I put my trust in the firmness, the union, the consolidation, the unconquerable energy, the unquenchable spirit, and the indomitable determination of seven millions of the Irish people."

How curiously was the sagacity of this political forecast justified by events. Within a year Lord Anglesea had become a convert to Emancipation; within two years he was recalled from his post for encouraging agitation; and little more than three had elapsed when the author of this speech was offered a seat by him in the House of Commons.

Another and equally important change had taken place in the Irish administration. Lord Manners, who for twenty years had presided in the Court of Chancery, was removed, and the seals transferred to the custody of Sir Anthony Hart. A greater contrast could hardly be conceived than that which existed between the learned, impartial, and discerning judge selected by Mr. Canning to fill the highest judicial office in Ireland, and his incapable predecessor. Sir Anthony Hart had won his way to eminence

in his profession by his ability, perseverance, and integrity alone; Lord Manners had never been eminent at the bar, and would have never been heard of anywhere else had he not had the good fortune to belong to the noble family whose name he bore. After an unusually brief period of nominal practice, he was created a Baron of the Exchequer in England, where, sitting beside experienced judges, his deficiencies were less observable; but when alone on circuit they could not be hidden. The blunders of the new baron became a jest in Westminster Hall. His presence was felt by his party to be a continual cause of reproach. It was therefore resolved, on their return to power in 1807, to let him down on the Irish woolsack, his banishment being consoled with a peerage and 10,000*l.* a-year. He was by nature gifted with most of the negative qualities which, in persons who occupy great place, and who have great patronage to dispense, commonly pass for virtues. He was not ungracious to those about him, or wanting in courtesy to the practitioners in his court. He was not without a certain sense of the dignity of speech and look that befitted his office; and in the discharge of its functions he was neither capricious nor corrupt. Nobody ever heard him give vent to a sple-

netic expression, or heard him perpetrate an unseemly jest. When asked what he thought of Lord Manners, Curran is said to have replied, "politically he is ready for any mischief, in private he is a pleasant dull man."

A valedictory address from the bar was presented by the new Attorney-General, Mr. Joy, whose love of irony Mr. Sheil affected to recognise as deriving exquisite gratification from the esoteric meaning of the extravagant praise he had undertaken to utter:—

"It would have been a great misfortune for the lovers of ridicule if any man except Mr. Joy had pronounced the address which was delivered to the departing Chancellor. He is a great master of mockery. So strong is his addiction to that species of satire which is contained in exaggerated praise, that he scarcely ever resorts to any other species of vituperation. Nature has been singularly favourable to him. His short and upturned nose is admirably calculated to toss his sarcasms off. His piercing and peering eyes gleam and flash in the voluptuousness of malice, and exhibit the keen delight with which he revels in ridicule and luxuriates in derision. His chin is protruded, like that of the Cynic listening to St. Paul, in Raphael's cartoon; his muscles are full of flexibility, and are capable of adapting themselves to every modification of irony. They have the advantage, too, of being covered with a skin that dimples into sneers with a plastic facility, and looks like a manuscript of Juvenal found in the ashy libraries of Herculaneum. His face was an admirable commentary on the enormity of the encomium which he was deputed

to offer. 'We,' said Mr. Joy, 'cannot but admire that distinguished ability, that strict impartiality, and that unremitting assiduity with which you have discharged the various duties of your office.' . . . At the word 'ability' it was easy to perceive that he could with difficulty restrain his sense of extravagance from breaking into laughter. . . It was impossible to look at him without remembering the exhibitions which for twenty years had made the administration of justice in the Irish Court of Chancery the subject of Lord Redesdale's laughter, and of John Lord Eldon's tears."*

But of those who contributed to form the remodelled Irish Government, the person who was destined subsequently to bear the most distinguished part in public affairs, was the new Chief Secretary. Mr. Lamb had previously been known chiefly as a man of pleasure, whose occasional appearance in Parliament made the more ambitious members of his party regret that he took apparently so little concern in the business of political life. His naturally fine understanding had been alike matured by varied reading and early knowledge of the world; but up to the period in question he had never been placed in a position fitted to call forth the exercise of its higher powers. He was generally supposed to be

* Farewell of Lord Manners. New Monthly Magazine. Vol. xxii., p. 99.

incapable of practical attention to details, such as that which his new office required, and his speedy failure was confidently reckoned upon by the old masters of routine, whose system and whose principles his presence tended to disturb. Nor were these anticipations left altogether unaided to work out their own fulfilment. On arriving at Dublin Castle, he found neither an Under-Secretary nor a Solicitor-General; Mr. Gregory, who for many years had filled the former post, having selected that particular occasion for leave of absence; and Lord Manners having refused to ratify the nomination of Mr. Doherty to the latter office. But Mr. Lamb was not a man to be disconcerted by such acts of petty treason among his colleagues or subordinates. A few weeks of sedulous application rendered him tolerably familiar with the business of his office, and by his combined firmness and good humour the affected scruples of the Chancellor were at length overcome. Mr. Gregory came back in due time, without having been sent for, and the Chief Secretary having given the tone to the manner in which the correspondence of his department should in future be conducted, allowed the veteran official to resume his task with a somewhat mended pen.

He was desirous of showing in other ways also that a change of spirit and temper was about to be infused into the conduct of public affairs. It is hardly possible now to realize the repulsive features which marked, in social life, the long-established policy of religious exclusion. Not only did all the occupants of official station belong to the favoured creed, but their very hospitalities were almost invariably bounded by regard to the same rule of privilege; and when the Catholic appeared as a guest at the Viceroy's table, he was stared at as an apparition, and the circumstance became the subject of vituperative articles in the journals of the day. Mr. Lamb was perhaps the first in his position who determined to break down this odious and miserable distinction. He took care that his invitations should include persons of all opinions and persuasions. To the more prominent members of the Association, he probably felt that it would be an indiscretion to appear to proffer courtesies that, upon both sides of the Channel, were likely to be set down for more than they were worth. But he had no mind to leave himself without the opportunity of making the popular leaders personally aware of his real sentiments and dispositions, or, upon the other hand, of forming his own estimate of them. Having expressed a peculiar wish to meet Mr. Sheil

under circumstances that could compromise neither, a small dinner party was made for the purpose by Mr. (now Sir Philip) Crampton. It was the first occasion on which they had ever met. There was little reserve on either side, and each confessed afterwards that the impression left by the other was higher and better than he had anticipated.

During the summer and autumn, agrarian violence once more burst forth with all its fearful accompaniments. Noontide witnessed deeds generally done under cover of night. "There is a kind of instinct by which men are restrained from the committal of atrocities in the light of day, as if the sun were the eye of God, and murder did not dare to encounter its contemplation."* But after dwelling with great force upon the horrors of what Lord Bacon has called "the wild justice of revenge," Mr. Sheil urged the duty of searching out the source of this desolating stream of iniquity. That source Mr. Sheil believed to be social and sectarian misrule; and while he never shrunk from denouncing blood-guiltiness and violence in every form, he constantly inveighed against what he deemed its legal provocations.† A report from the Emigration Commissioners had recommended the allocation of no less

* Speech in Association, 6th October, 1827.
† Speech at Clonmel, 8th April, 1827.

a sum than 11,000,000*l.* for the removal to the colonies of the unemployed labouring classes. Others humanely urged the establishment of a Poor Law; but the Legislature, while it refused to do either, passed an act which compelled the dispossession of multitudes of helpless beings for whom no provision whatever had been made. To this, as was natural, the bitterest reproaches and remonstrances were directed. The sub-letting act was the object of loud invective from the manner in which it was passed; and many devoted friends of popular right, while admitting that the system of land tenancy heretofore existing, was fraught with economic evils that demanded a remedy, argued that it was alike inhuman and unwise suddenly to deprive whole classes of the community, by enactments of a prohibitory character, of the only means of subsistence they had ever known. Mr. Sheil entertained this view, and enforced it on various occasions with his usual energy and vigour.*

Among other projects for the sustainment of renewed agitation in 1825, was one for "a direct attack upon the Established Church in Ireland, and giving it no quarter."† The idea, however, does not

* See speech 27th December, 1827, &c.

† Moore's Diary, 4th January, 1826.

seem to have found general acceptance amongst those of most weight in the councils of agitation, and was not revived until a later period. But the hostility of the established clergy continually provoked bitter reproaches and taunts regarding the excessive wealth which, as a body, they enjoyed.

At the period in question, the annual revenues of the see of Dublin were estimated at no less a sum than 14,000*l*. a year, and to many of the other bishoprics were annexed stipends equally disproportioned to the duties to be performed. The Primacy was said to amount to 16,000*l*. a year. Had the Protestant prelates been less active and constant in their support of political intolerance, the ostentation of their luxurious mode of living would probably have escaped the severity of public criticism. Had they even been divided amongst themselves in their partisanship, the fear of alienating friends might have prevented attacks upon foes. But on the Catholic question, the Irish bishops were unanimous. Upon every division in the House of Lords, their votes were uniformly recorded for the maintenance of sectarian ascendency. The name of Bathurst, the venerable Bishop of Norwich, was indeed often pronounced with gratitude during the period in question in public assemblages, and his

health was often drunk at public banquets as the mitred friend of religious liberty. But of the twenty-two most reverend and right reverend dignitaries whose dioceses lay in Ireland, not one for many years was found to vote either for the repeal of the Test Act or for Catholic Emancipation. The internal abuses of the Establishment had not then been publicly inquired into, or in their full extent exposed; but the glaring disparity of incomes, and the flagrant frequency of pluralities and sinecures, presented opportunities for sarcasm and rebuke too tempting to be overlooked.

On the 1st December, 1827, a speech was made by Mr. Sheil, wherein he professed to explain his reasons for moving an address to the prelates and dignitaries of the Established Church, praying that they would, for the sake of their souls' health, retrench somewhat of their unapostolic luxury, and that they would be induced to administer some gentle physic to their pomp. As though he were recounting passages in a dream, he proceeds to contrast the haughty splendour of the episcopate, with the meek frugality of those whom it professed to look back to as its founders.

"I thought that I was living at the period when, some years after the death of Tiberius, Christianity was, in the midst of per-

secution, making rapid way. I saw the inspired and lofty-minded men, to whom the great object of illuminating mankind had been committed, go forth from Palestine, and proclaim in the metropolis of the world, as the heralds of heaven, the eternal truths, of which they were the repositories. I saw them, in the calm and unostentatious courage derived from the assurance of immortality, look upon death and the torments which preceded it without dismay. But what struck me far more than the meek heroism of endurance, was their exemplification of the Divine philosophy, of which they were the professors, in the simplicity of their deportment, in the humility of their mild demeanour, in their spirit of benevolence and of mercy, in their abstinence and self-denial, in their utter contempt of riches, and in the fixedness of their regards upon those objects of everlasting interest to which their eyes and hearts were unremittingly exalted. They did not reside in gorgeous palaces, while they instructed their followers in the wisdom of poverty and the usefulness of sorrow. Their lessons of humility were not announced from the porticos of princes—it was not from the banquet hall that they issued their ordinances of abstinence; nor did they, from the primrose path of luxury, point to the steep and thorny road to heaven. I saw no train of pampered minions in their retinue. I beheld no mitres upon the chariots in which they had journeyed from Jerusalem to Rome. I saw no bench of bishops in the senate. . . . . Neither did I hear anything of running a bishop's life against a lease, nor of a bishop executing a renewal, and touching ten thousand pounds on his death-bed, when he was about to render an account of his ministry, and to stand in the dreadful sight of the living God. I heard nothing of tithes, and vestries, and cesses. I saw no ecclesiastical courts, no metropolitans, no surrogates, no ministers, no civil bills, no proctors, no distrainings, no executions, no sales of blankets, no auctions of beds of straw, 'in the name of Him who died;' no trial before one priest of the corporate interests of another. There was, indeed, one individual who suggested a sin-

gular project. His name was Simon Magus. This fellow proposed to establish a mining company, declaring that he had discovered a rich vein of gold under the barren rocks of Mount Calvary. But the proposition was indignantly rejected. You are aware that dreams are proverbially capricious—

'The children of an idle brain,
Begot of nothing but vain phantasy.'

It was under this strong influence that I was suddenly transferred to a very different period. Queen Mab shifted the scene of the puppet-show which is played in a dreamer's head. I thought that all at once I posted from Rome to London, and leaped over whole tracts of centuries in a single bound. It was, perhaps, owing to my reading of Southey's 'Book of the Church,' together with Paley's 'Evidences,' that this immense transition was instantaneously effected, and I stood at the outside of Saint Stephen's Chapel. Here a new spectacle presented itself. There came rattling down Palace Yard a series of splendid carriages, with mitres upon their panels, which were drawn by horses superbly caparisoned, and conducted by portly charioteers, placed upon lofty seats, with laced cocked hats upon their heads, overtopping tremendous periwigs, while a profusion of golden epaulettes depended from the shoulders of these pampered slaves. When I saw them at a distance, I took these vehicles for the carriages of the great, the noble, and princely of the land. Judge, then, of my astonishment when, as they approached, and drew up with an awful clatter at the portico of the House of Lords, I beheld the twelve apostles dressed in lawn sleeves, together with the early fathers of the church, with St. Paul at their head. 'In sooth, gentlemen,' I exclaimed, 'you are amazingly changed since I saw you last.'"*

Notwithstanding the facility he was supposed to have attained, by practice, in the art of addressing

* Speech in Association, 1st December, 1827.

popular assemblies, his unabated sense of the value of careful preparation rendered him still very unwilling to speak without it on any important occasion. When he had not time fully to arrange beforehand his thoughts and even his words, he preferred remaining altogether silent; and when he had elaborately prepared what he meant to say, it was not easy to dissuade him from giving it utterance. A friend who was about to accompany him on one occasion to a meeting at Wexford, heard him, with some surprise and apprehension, say, that he had selected for the theme of his intended discourse, certain incidents in the history of 1798. In vain he was reminded that in that part of the country (where in point of fact the struggle had been waged more fiercely and continuously than in any other), fearful recollections were still fresh in many hearts; and that of the ruins caused by that outburst of popular despair, the ashes were not yet cold. In reply to some suggestion that other topics might easily furnish appropriate matter for a speech, he said it was all very well to talk of extempore eloquence, but that he had not the gift; and that as he had not time to compose another speech, he must use what he had prepared. But on being at length reminded that an individual was cer-

tain to be at the meeting whose feelings were likely to be deeply hurt by the course of observation he designed to employ, he at once gave in; and when called upon, delivered a most effective harangue full of argument and imagery, topics of the day, and illustrations from history, but not a word of '98.

During the years 1826 and 1827, his contributions to the New Monthly were, in addition to those already noticed incidentally,—Calamities of the Bar, Diary of a Barrister during the last Wexford Assizes, and Sketches of Mr. Bellew and Lord Norbury. The last of these is perhaps the best specimen of his powers of humour; but the subject was a tempting one. No levity of ridicule, or intensity of scorn, could be inappropriately applied to the man who, for twenty years, profaned the judgment-seat by the alternate exhibition of his qualities of butcher and buffoon. Lord Norbury was not a man to be caricatured; for nothing could be half so grotesque or undignified as a perfect portrait of him. Here is a peep into his study:—

"In the centre of the room lies a heap of old papers, covered with dust, mingled with political pamphlets, written some forty years ago, together with an odd volume of 'The Irish Parliamentary Debates,' recording the speeches of Mr. Sergeant Toler. On the shelves, which are half empty, and exhibit a most 'beg-

gaily-account,' there are some forty moth-eaten law books, and by their side appear odd volumes of 'Peregrine Pickle,' and 'Roderick Random,' with the 'Newgate Calendar' complete. A couple of worn-out saddles, with rusty stirrups, hang from the top of one of the bookcases, which are enveloped with cobwebs; and a long line of veteran boots, of mouldy leather, are arrayed on the opposite side of the room. King William's picture stands over the chimney-piece, with prints of Eclipse and other celebrated racers, from which his Lordship's politics and other predilections may be collected."

A scene in the Court of Common Pleas in Ireland, when presided over by his Lordship, is thus given :—

"His performances at Nisi Prius were greatly preferable, in the decline of the Dublin stage, to any theatrical exhibition; and as he drew exceedingly full houses, Mr. Jones began to look at him with some jealousy, and is said to have been advised by Mr. Sergeant Goold, who had a share of 3565*l.* 5*s.* 9¾*d.* in Crow-street theatre, to file a bill for an injunction against the Chief Justice, for an infringement of his patent. Lord Norbury was at the head of an excellent company. The spirit of the judge extended itself naturally enough to the counsel; and men who were grave and considerate everywhere else, threw off all soberness and propriety, and became infected with the habits of the venerable manager of the court, the moment they entered the Common Pleas. His principal performers were Messrs. Grady, Wallace, O'Connell, and Goold, who instituted a sort of rivalry in uproar, and played against each other. With such a judge, and such auxiliaries to co-operate with him, some idea may be formed of the attractions which were held out to that numerous class in Dublin who have no fixed occupation, and by whom, in the hope of laughing hunger away, the Four Courts are frequented. Long before Lord Norbury took his seat, the galleries were densely filled with faces strangely expressive of idleness, hag-

gardness, and humour. At about eleven his Lordship's registrar, Mr. Peter Jackson, used to slide in, with an official leer; and a little after, Lord Norbury entered, with a grotesque waddle, and having bowed to the Bar, cast his eyes round the court. . . While the jury were swearing, he nodded familiarly to most of them, occasionally observing, 'A most respectable man.' . . The junior counsel having opened the pleadings, Lord Norbury generally exclaimed, 'A very promising young man! Jackson, what is that young gentleman's name?' 'Mr. ———, my Lord.' 'What! of the County Cork? I knew it by his air, sir. You are a gentleman of very high pretensions, and I protest I have never heard the many counts stated in a more dignified manner in all my life. I hope I shall find you, like the paper before me, a Daily Freeman in my court.' Having despatched the junior, whom he was sure to make the luckless but not inappropriate victim of his encomiums, he suffered the leading counsel to proceed. As he was considered to have a strong bias towards the plaintiff, experimental attorneys brought in the Common Pleas the very worst and most discreditable adventures in litigation. The statement of the case, therefore, generally disclosed some paltry ground of action, which, however, did not prevent his Lordship exclaiming in the outset, 'A very important action, indeed! If you make out your facts in evidence, Mr. Wallace, there will be serious matter for the jury.' The evidence was then produced; and the witnesses often consisted of wretches whose emaciated and discoloured countenances showed their want and depravity; while their watchful and working eyes intimated that mixture of sagacity and humour by which the lower orders of Irish attestators are distinguished. They generally appeared in coats and breeches, the external decency of which, as they were hired for the occasion, was ludicrously contrasted with the ragged and filthy shirts, which Mr. Henry Dean Grady, who was well acquainted with 'the inner man' of an Irish witness, though not without repeated injunctions to unbutton, at last compelled them to disclose. The cross-

examinations of this gentleman were admirable pieces of the most serviceable and dexterous extravagance. He was the Scarron of the bar; and few of the most practised and skilful of the horde of perjurers whom he was employed to encounter, could successfully withstand the exceedingly droll and comical scrutiny through which he forced them to pass. He had a sort of 'Hail fellow, well met!' manner with every varlet, which enabled him to get into his heart and core, until he had completely turned him inside out, and excited such a spirit of mirth, that the knave whom he was uncovering could not help joining in the merriment which the detection of his villany had produced. Lord Norbury, however, when he saw Mr. Grady pushing the plaintiff to extremities, used to come to his aid, and rally the broken recollections of the witness. This interposition called the defendant's counsel into stronger action, and they were as vigorously encountered by the counsel on the other side. Interruption created remonstrance; remonstrance called forth retort; retort generated sarcasm; and at length voices were raised so loud, and the blood of the forensic combatants was so warmed, that a general scene of confusion, to which Lord Norbury most amply contributed, took place. The uproar gradually increased till it became tremendous; and to add to the tumult, a question of law, which threw Lord Norbury's faculties into a complete chaos, was thrown into the conflict. Mr Grady and Mr. O'Connell shouted upon one side, Mr. Wallace and Mr. Goold upon the other; and at last, Lord Norbury, the witnesses, the counsel, the parties, and the audience, were engaged in one universal riot, in which it was difficult to determine whether the laughter of the audience, the exclamations of the parties, the protestations of the witnesses, the cries of the counsel, or the bellowing of Lord Norbury, predominated. At length, however, his lordship's superiority of lungs prevailed; and, like Æolus in his cavern (of whom, with his puffed cheeks and inflamed visage, he would furnish a painter with a model,) he shouted his stormy subjects into peace. These scenes repeatedly occurred during the trial, until at last both parties had

closed, and a new exhibition took place. This was Lord Norbury's monologue, commonly called a charge. He usually began by pronouncing the loftiest encomiums upon the party in the action against whom he intended to advise the jury to give their verdict. For this the audience were well prepared; and accordingly, after he had stated that the defendant was one of the most honorable men alive, and that he knew his father, and loved him, he suddenly came with a most singular emphasis, which he accompanied with a strange shake of his wig, to the fatal 'but,' which made the audience, who were in expectation of it, burst into a fit of laughter, while he proceeded to charge, as he almost uniformly did, in the plaintiff's favour. He then entered more deeply, as he said, into the case, and, flinging his judicial robe half aside, and sometimes casting off his wig, started from his seat, and threw off a wild harangue, in which neither law, method, nor argument could be discovered. It generally consisted of narratives connected with the history of his early life, which it was impossible to associate with the subject—of jests from Joe Miller, mixed with jokes of his own manufacture, and of sarcastic allusions to any of the counsel who had endeavoured to check him during the trial. He was exceedingly fond of quotations from Milton and Shakspeare, which, however out of place, were exceedingly well delivered, and evinced an excellent enunciation. At the conclusion of his charge, he made some efforts to call the attention of the jury to any leading incident which particularly struck him, but what he meant it was not very easy to conjecture; and when he sat down, the whole performance exhibited a mind which resembled a whirlpool of mud, in which law, facts, arguments, and evidence were lost in unfathomable confusion."

The darker shades of Lord Norbury's character are touched with a forbearing hand in the sketch before us. The old man had been, with difficulty, induced by the grant of an earldom, to quit the bench a short

time before, and the good feeling of the writer doubtless shrunk from the task of calling up the ghastly memories of his career as a judicial partisan, as he tottered to the edge of the grave. This sentiment is obvious in the concluding passage :—

"Not many days ago, on my return to town from a short excursion in the country, as the evening drew on, I saw him riding near a cemetery, while the chill breezes of October were beginning to grow bitter, and the leaves were falling rapidly from the old and withered trees in the adjoining churchyard. The wind had an additional bleakness, and blew over the residences of the dead; and although it imparted to his red and manly cheeks a stronger flush, still, as it stirred his grey locks, it seemed, with its wintry murmurs, to whisper to the old man a funereal admonition. He appeared, as he urged on his horse and tried to hurry from so dismal a scene, to shrink and huddle himself from the blast. In anticipation of an event which cannot be remote (while I forgot all his political errors, and only remembered how he had beguiled a tedious hour, and set the Four Courts in a roar), I could not help muttering, as I passed him, with some feeling of regret, 'Alas, poor Yorick!'"

END OF VOL I.

LONDON
SAVILL AND EDWARDS, PRINTERS, CHANDOS STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.